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SCHIAVO'S AMERICA

JUDITH
MILLER'S
U.N. REPORTING
Russ Baker

LETTER FROM
JERUSALEM
Amy Wilentz

WALL STREET
AND MAIN
STREET
Mike Wallace



terri, smile if you
can hear me.



terri, smile if you
want to continue to
live in the
condition you are
in.



terri, smile if you
think this
administration is
interfering too much
with our private
lives.



terri, smile if you
think Tom DeLay might
have other reasons
for taking up your
cause.



terri, smile if you
think this is all
about politics.



terri, smile if you
think your husband
doesn't care about
you.



terri, smile if you
feel helpless and
out of control.



terri, smile if you
think the
fundamentalists are
using you to attack
the rationality of
scientific and
medical practice.



terri, do you think
we should all feel
like you do?

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LETTERS



R. O. BLECHMAN

BEDTIME FOR GONZO

Boulder, Colo.

■ Warren Hinckle's grand tribute to Hunter S. Thompson [March 21] defines "gonzo journalism" (where the reporter becomes "the active part of the story") as growing "out of a 1970 assignment I gave Thompson," for his *Ramparts*-esque *Scanlan's Monthly*. Thank God (and Mr. Hinckle) for having the chutzpah and foresight to let Hunter loose on the Kentucky Derby, where he met up with Ralph Steadman. But such editorial prescience—fostering a modern author's exorcising of American hypocrisies—dates back further. Tom Wolfe, in *The New Journalism*, writes about an assignment that the late David Newman of *Esquire* gave my father, Terry Southern, in 1962:

"It was the first example I noticed of a form of journalism in which the writer starts out to do a feature assignment ('Go to Mississippi and see what happens when five hundred pubescent baton twirlers meet in earnest competition') and ends up writing a curious form of autobiography.... The supposed subject...becomes incidental."

Professor William McKeen, chair of the University of Florida journalism department and editor of *Literary Journalism*, writes, "In many ways this story [Terry's "Twirling at Ole Miss"] provides a model for Hunter Thompson to follow later in the decade."

Perhaps the term "gonzo journalism" must indeed be reserved for the drugs, guns, politics and iron-in-the-soul agit-prop of HST, and the "new journalism," kicked off by Terry and carried on by writers like George Plimpton, Norman Mailer, Gay Talese, John Updike, Truman Capote, Molly Ivins, P.J. O'Rourke, Michael Herr, Mark Singer, Barbara Ehrenreich and Tom Wolfe, will be reinvented by today's outraged writers and (more important) tomorrow's media makers.

While my father set out to "blast smugness and complacency," I think Thompson became that impulse. As the neocon(job) bandwagon rolls along, the two of them must be shaking their heads with increasing incredulity.

NILE SOUTHERN

YOUNG & GHOULISH

Baltimore, Md.

■ Eric Alterman, in "Anti-Semite? Self-Hating Jew? *Moi?*?" shouldn't worry when people like Cathy Young attack him as a "self-hating" Jew ["The Liberal Media," March 28]. Take it as a compliment. When people like Cathy Young start praising him, then he should worry.

MARTIN LEFSTEIN

Newton, Mass.

■ With all due respect to Eric Alterman, his opening line, "That the *Boston Globe* is a great newspaper can be in no doubt," is dead wrong. Since being bought by the *New York Times* and particularly since Marty Baron became its editor, the national and international reporting has become dreadful; the editorial writers—Cathy Young and Jeff Jacoby in particular—are an embarrassment; the morale among reporters keeps sinking (there was more *joie de vivre* at David Nyhan's funeral than in the *Globe* building); and even its decent coverage of events like the Catholic Church sexual abuse scandal is grossly overdone. Even its sports section smothers you with too many articles on the same topic.

Believe me, Eric, I have read the *Globe* for years, and it may be the best lousy newspaper or the worst good newspaper, but it certainly is not without doubt a great newspaper. Try reading it on a daily basis.

RICHARD BLAZAR

ALTERMAN REPLIES

New York City

■ As a famous Jewish sage once said, "You may be right."

ERIC ALTERMAN

HOOP DREAMS

Escondido, Calif.

■ Re "In Fact..." March 21, "The Creditors' Ball": The Democratic Party is looking more and more like the hapless Washington Generals who play the foils to the Harlem Globetrotters. If ever there was an opportunity for Democratic senators to unite behind America's working class, the bankruptcy bill, which creates a new class of indentured servants, was it. Yet many Democratic senators willingly fell on their tushes, looked comically bewildered or forgot what team they were on as the GOP dribbled through them and slam-dunked this mean-spirited, ill-conceived legislation on the American people. Perhaps the Green Party needs to replace these clowns so there can be some real opposition to one-party government.

DENNIS M. CLAUSEN

NAME 'EM & SHAME 'EM!

Loveland, Colo.

■ Eighteen democrats caved in on tort "reform," going against what ought to be one of their fundamental principles, namely, protecting the rights of victims of corporate abuse to sue the offending corporations [Dan Zegart, "Tort 'Reform' Triumphs," March 7]. When this happens, *The Nation* should name these senators.

They are: Bayh (IN), Bingaman (NM),

Cantwell (WA), Carper (DE), Conrad (ND), Dodd (CT), Feinstein (CA), Johnson (SD), Kohl (WI), Landrieu (LA), Lieberman (CT), Lincoln (AR), Nelson (NE), Obama (IL), Reed (RI), Rockefeller (WV), Salazar (CO) and Schumer (NY).

Even some progressives voted for the so-called Class Action Fairness Act, which shows that we citizens cannot take even progressive senators' votes for granted. Every one of these votes should be considered a failure by grassroots groups in the respective states.

ROBERT BAILLIE

Brooklyn, NY

■ Dan Zegart is absolutely right to call the Class Action Fairness Act "a catastrophe for workers and consumers," as he is right to draw connections between tort "reform" and the right wing's other attacks on poor and working Americans. Unfortunately, some leaders of the labor movement have actually jumped on board with the right, supporting tort reform initiatives and caps on asbestos-victim compensation. Last year the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) drew fire from groups such as the AARP and California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform for helping nursing-home companies lobby for tort reform in the California legislature. The bill in question would have severely limited patients' ability to sue nursing homes over mistreatment. Why would a union support such measures? In exchange for its lobbying, SEIU was promised unfettered access to organize nursing-home workers.

Similarly, the United Auto Workers is one of many unions that aggressively supported the Fairness in Asbestos Injury Resolution Act of 2004, legislation that would have prevented victims from suing companies for punitive damages. In urging the Senate to pass this bill, these union leaders said it would be a way to alleviate the "asbestos litigation crisis." As Zegart rightly points out, such litigation crises are works of exaggeration or outright fiction, crafted by right-wing "legal extremists." But union leaders' support for tort reform and similar measures illustrates a true crisis facing all progressives—the growing number of "progressive" leaders who have decided that the only way to beat the right is to join them.

WILLIAM JOHNSON

Labor Notes

'SHOOTING THE MESSENGER' INDEED

Cupertino, Calif.

■ Jeremy Scahill's "Shooting the Messenger" [March 7] was an excellent overview of the

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EDITORIALS

Schiaivo as Prologue

The Terri Schiaivo case was no sideshow. As her parents' legal appeals failed repeatedly, as protests and press conferences wound into what was almost certainly the final phase of sorrow, recrimination and relief, the entire episode might have seemed a bizarre, media-driven distraction from pressing issues of war and the economy. In fact, the case goes to the heart of political choices confronting the country.

For leaders of the Christian right, the case was only their most recent attempt to elevate to the level of national crusade issues like gay unions and abstinence-only sex education. Each invokes moral alarm (the morality determined by the self-righteous) against considered, scientifically informed public policy, and each involves a demand for state intrusion into well-established zones of privacy and civil rights. Each also serves as a surrogate issue for a movement whose main target is abortion rights—rights that retain overwhelming public support. Anti-abortion fanatics who preened before the Pinellas Park press corps were not so much speaking to the general public as raising the temperature of their own faithful.

The Schiaivo case would probably have remained marginal but for the 2003 intervention of Florida Governor Jeb Bush, who pushed through his state legislature the same kind of attack on unanimous Schiaivo court rulings that Tom DeLay and the White House would later try at the federal level. The Bush clan takes on no issue without political calculation, and here the math was precise. The religious right remembers well that grandfather Prescott Bush was Planned Parenthood's best friend in the Senate and that father George H.W. Bush was staunchly pro-choice up to the moment of his selection as Ronald Reagan's running mate. Neither Bush brother ever misses a chance to prove his Christian-right allegiance. Just ten months after Jeb's unsuccessful intervention in the Schiaivo case, the votes and phone banks

of Florida's Christian right helped to determine a national election. DeLay, whose own family once made a life-ending decision like Michael Schiaivo's about DeLay's father, now panders to the same constituency to save his own skin.

The attack on an independent judiciary is why the case is so relevant to the immediate future—notably the imminent confirmation battles over George W. Bush's judicial nominees. The language of virtually every far-right leader discussing the Schiaivo case was devoted to delegitimizing the federal judiciary and stoking resentment at the court system as a whole. Jerry Falwell: "Just because there is a judge somewhere in the world who would give an estranged husband like that the time of day tells you how bad the court system is." Richard Viguerie: "The judiciary is out of control." Such talk softens up the public for the confirmation battles ahead and, more important, feeds the right's sense of its victimization by public institutions. Taking back the courts is the right's post-Schiaivo rallying cry.

Where is all this headed? In ways reminiscent of Bill Clinton's impeachment, polls suggest a welcome sense in the Schiaivo case that the right overplayed its hand, that the American people maintain a bedrock commitment to privacy and an unease with the far right's fervor. But it's also important to remember that while impeachment failed, Democrats lost the White House in 2000. The White House is counting on the public sense of a delegitimized court system surviving longer than unease with moral crusaders. It is counting, as well, on the evident confusion in Democratic Congressional ranks about the real issues in the Schiaivo case. Most important, the White House and Republican Congressional leaders are counting on the Christian right's sense of being victimized by the courts to embolden their efforts; in the coming campaign to remake America's federal judiciary, they see the protesters of Pinellas Park as their shock troops. They must not be allowed to succeed. The Schiaivo case foretells a broader assault on courts as bastions of secular public policy. It is not a moral but a political crusade.

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Miller's UN Reporting



The editorial page of the *New York Times* recently led with a justifiably outraged condemnation of George W. Bush's choice for United Nations ambassador—John Bolton, a famously outspoken anti-UN and antimultilateral ideologue. How ironic, then, that the *Times*'s news editors had previously dispatched to the UN a reporter tight with the same Boltonite unilateralist clique—a reporter who has written about alleged wrongdoing at the UN in such an exaggerated way as to cast the organization and its leadership as almost beyond redemption.

When she began her work at the UN, Judith Miller was still under a cloud for her starring role in the Iraq Invasion Follies, in which she hyped Saddam Hussein's alleged weapons of mass destruction and Al Qaeda ties—claims that greatly buttressed the White House case for war but that ultimately proved unfounded [see Baker, "'Scoops' and Truth at the *Times*," June 23, 2003]. The *Times*, which has since published a series of mea culpas, placed Miller in a quasi quarantine, according to insiders at the paper. Yet she re-emerged, amazingly, still writing about Iraq—now from an oblique angle: the UN's alleged mismanagement of the Iraqi Oil for Food program.

In January 2004 the Iraqi daily *Al-Mada* listed 270 people suspected of profiting while enabling Saddam's government to evade oil sales restrictions. By April an independent UN inquiry was under way, headed by former Federal Reserve chair Paul Volcker. In May Miller was put on the story. Several *Times* sources say they believe Miller requested the assignment. Miller did not respond to interview requests, and *Times* executive editor Bill Keller declined to comment.

To be sure, the UN is an institution needing reform, and the Oil for Food program, troubled. Volcker found that the Oil for Food chief, Benon Sevan, acted in a way that "presented a grave and continuing conflict of interest" and was "ethically improper"—and can't explain cash he received. The report did not, however, suggest that Sevan's actions indicated widespread or higher-level graft. But an examination of Miller's work shows that she used contrivances of tone and framing and selective citation of biased sources to create a headline-generating super-scandal—one that Volcker's newest (March 29) report confirms to be thus far without serious foundation.

Since October 22 she has produced no fewer than twenty-one articles on the matter, nine of them centered on criticism by Capitol Hill figures with no love for the UN. She reported the scandal, GOP senators and House members investigated and she reported the investigations themselves as evidence that corruption was far more widespread than the facts indicated. And through many of her articles echoed the mantra of Republican senator and key source Norm Coleman's *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, "Kofi Annan Must Go."

In January, when Volcker released internal UN audits, Miller's framing was subtly but significantly different from that of other journalists. The *LA Times* lead characterized the audits as showing "lax oversight," while Miller attempted to tie the short-

COMMENT

comings directly to Annan, reporting that the audits “criticize an office, led by a former top aide to...Annan.” Only in Miller’s thirteenth paragraph do we read that “Mr. Volcker said that the internal audits ‘don’t prove anything,’ but do show how the United Nations was urged to tighten up its supervision of the program. ‘There’s no flaming red flags in the stuff,’ he said.”

When Volcker’s February interim report similarly failed to sweepingly condemn the institution, Miller’s tone turned disdainful. Casting the document as “eagerly and skeptically awaited by United Nations critics” and “months overdue,” she pointedly reported that “conservatives and other critics have accused [Volcker] of being insufficiently impartial and independent.” Miller left it to others—including the *Financial Times*’s Claudio Gatti—to suggest that violations of the Oil for Food rules had been tacitly tolerated by US authorities. Miller’s articles also conspicuously dismiss the program’s role in keeping Iraq WMD-free, a point that would remind readers of her transgressions in the pre-war period.

Miller’s bias has been most apparent in her spotlighting of consulting work Kofi Annan’s son did for a Swiss-based company, Cotecna Inspection Services, which won a UN contract for monitoring Oil for Food deliveries into Iraq. Granted, nepotism makes for poor governance and great newspaper copy—and Kojo Annan’s behavior raises serious questions, but Miller’s *Times* articles have relentlessly sought to tie UN problems directly to the elder Annan, long a target of America’s unilateralist right.

In one piece, Miller practically dragged Ambassador John Danforth, well-known for his moderate views and comparative affection for the UN, to the witness table. “Pressed by reporters on Monday...Danforth...specifically declined to say he had confidence in Mr. Annan’s leadership,” wrote Miller on December 1. In comparison, the *Washington Post*’s UN correspondent, Colum Lynch, also quoted Danforth but left out the “declines to support” formulation, even though Lynch was presumably one of the “reporters” who, Miller claimed, were pressing Danforth.

Similar slant was evident in advance coverage of the latest Volcker report, chiding Kofi Annan for inadequate vigilance over his son’s dealings with Cotecna. The Associated Press leads with “investigators...will not accuse [Annan] of corruption,” and the *Wall Street Journal* notes, “The panel has concluded that there is no evidence Mr. Annan rigged...procurement...exerted undue influence...or ever sought or received improper financial benefits.” [emphasis added.] But Miller’s piece (bylined with UN bureau chief Warren Hoge) says that the report “will come as a setback for the beleaguered secretary general,” and waits till paragraph seven to offer a more reluctant vindication of Annan: “the commission has not uncovered any evidence [of corruption].”

Another co-bylined Miller piece, in the March 29 *Times*, focuses on Volcker revelations that Annan’s former chief of staff had assistants toss Oil for Food files. Only lower in the article, under the subhead “Oil Report to Say Aide to Annan Culled Files,” do we read that the files were his personal copies of originals stored elsewhere, and that he insists it was a routine culling to clear out space. The *Times* story the next day on the report itself, written by Hoge alone, somewhat grudgingly acknowledged the panel’s

conclusion that Annan “had not influenced the awarding of” the contract to his son’s former company. Miller, too, was in that issue—with another itty-bitty alleged malfeasance. “United Nations diplomats” (not American, by any chance?) released an internal UN report about a UN office with a thirteen-person staff and a budget of \$2 million criticizing such practices as sexual innuendo and using staff for personal errands—hardly unique in corners of vast enterprises. The report, dated February 16, was conveniently provided to journalists as the new Volcker report appeared.

Given the consequences of Miller’s shilling for Bush Administration unilateralists during the run-up to the UN-opposed Iraq invasion, it seems remarkable that her editors would grant her a similar role in covering the complex Oil for Food scandal—especially given the *Times*’s unique role in setting the global news agenda and establishing perceptions. As one diplomat from a Western country put it to me, “I think there is a more balanced and nuanced picture of the Oil for Food program to be presented.” In a brief conversation, Hoge told me that Miller had been brought into this story specifically to do investigative reporting. But her work bears little resemblance to classic journalistic gumshoeing.

So what’s her real contribution? I asked another *Times* colleague who has worked with Miller. He replied, “They feel that, through her work, people in positions of power speak on the pages of the *New York Times*. Whether it is true or not is another issue.”

RUSS BAKER

Russ Baker (www.russbaker.com), an investigative reporter and essayist, is a longtime Nation contributor. Research support for this editorial was provided by the Investigative Fund of The Nation Institute. Alexa Danner provided research assistance.

Fighting for Unions

Some 57 million nonunion workers in the United States say they would form a union tomorrow if given the chance, according to new poll conducted in February by Peter D. Hart and Associates. For many of them, especially women and people of color, having a union is often the difference between living in or out of poverty. Yet the truth is that a sophisticated and systematic effort to deny workers their basic freedom of association is rampant in this country.

Employers and antiunion consultants have effectively thwarted the intent and efficacy of the law that supposedly guarantees workers the freedom to form unions, a human right protected by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and recognized by the US government thirteen years earlier in the National Labor Relations Act.

To put it in perspective: More than 20,000 US workers were fired or discriminated against for union activities, according to a National Labor Relations Board annual report. That amounts to a worker in this country being fired or discriminated against every twenty-six minutes for exercising the basic human right to form or join a union. Most employers infringe on workers’ freedom to make their own decisions—routinely using legal and illegal

COMMENT

tactics to thwart their efforts—according to Cornell University researcher Kate Bronfenbrenner. Fully one-quarter of private-sector employers illegally fire workers. And even after workers jump through all the hoops under current law and win recognition for their union, employers refuse to agree to initial collective bargaining contracts nearly half the time. This is a moral outrage.

Simply put: Our labor laws are so weak that employers routinely get away with breaking them, and when they are punished the penalties are insufficient to deter other unscrupulous employers from breaking the law. Right now the only penalty for most violations of the rights of workers to form unions is that the company must post a notice stating that it violated the law. Sometimes

it takes several years before that happens, long after the effort to form a union has ended. The delay-prone and contentious NLRB election process is so unfairly skewed in employers' favor that the vast majority of workers decide to opt out of the process and use a majority-sign-up agreement, often called a card check, instead.

In November 2003 lawmakers introduced the Employee Free Choice Act. Under this legislation, when a majority of employees in a workplace sign cards declaring their desire to form a union, their employer is required to recognize their union. The act also toughens the penalties for violations of employee rights during organizing drives and contract disputes. In an effort led by workers, their unions and allies, 210 members of the House of Representatives signed on to the act (less than eight shy of a majority), as did thirty-eight members of the Senate. The Employee Free Choice Act will be reintroduced as bipartisan legislation this month. Initially, our goal is to re-sign the vast majority of co-sponsors from last session, and by the end of the year we hope to secure majority support in the House and a larger plurality in the Senate.

Building support for the act is a critical battle, and we must show both parties that our effort and outrage will not subside until this bill becomes law. Scores of victimized workers will tell their experience firsthand to their elected leaders. In addition, the labor movement must educate and involve thousands of union activists and staff—and 100,000 rank-and-file union members in strategic areas. Working closely with allies, we must expand our base of support within the religious community and create vehicles for religious groups to include this effort in their work.

The labor movement, while still debating the direction of the AFL-CIO, agrees almost unanimously that the freedom to form unions is the central issue at the heart of our work over the next four years. Progressives outside the labor movement have to own this fight as well. Frankly, I can't think of a single more significant thing we can do together in this climate. Every effort to frustrate workers trying to exercise their fundamental human right to have a union must be addressed and treated as the moral catastrophe it is. The whole community needs to be aware of employer interference in organizing, leading to a groundswell of moral outrage that inspires people to agitate and disrupt business as usual.

In addition, the labor movement needs to provide leadership that allows and fosters the mass movement of workers to change the climate for organizing. The fact is that ultimately, rank-and-file workers' willingness or unwillingness to fight for this issue will determine what happens to us. That is why it is critical that anything we do to reform the AFL-CIO must include an expansion of the role of mobilizing workers as its central component.

This is a fight that goes on until we win, because allowing workers to freely form unions is an essential step toward restoring balance to our economic system, lifting people from poverty, strengthening democratic participation and insuring corporate accountability. We must wage this fight because it is the right thing to do and because history will judge our action at this incredibly decisive moment.

STEWART ACUFF

Stewart Acuff is the AFL-CIO's national organizing director. This article is adapted from remarks delivered in Wisconsin on February 11.

CALVIN TRILLIN

SENATOR BILL FRIST, A THORACIC SURGEON WHO MADE A NEUROLOGICAL DIAGNOSIS OF TERRI SCHIAVO AFTER WATCHING A VIDEO OF HER, REPORTS ON A PHYSICAL EXAMINATION HE'S DONE OF JEB BUSH, HIS POTENTIAL RIVAL FOR THE 2008 REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION, AFTER OBSERVING ONE OF THE GOVERNOR'S FLORIDA PRESS CONFERENCES ON TELEVISION

From that slight slump I'd make the diagnosis
Of just a tiny touch of scoliosis,
Which likely could be kept in check unless
He tried to take a job with too much stress.
And judging from his pudginess of chops, he
Is likely to be suffering from dropsy.
From bagginess of trouser legs we see
He's got himself a case of housemaid's knee.
He could have gout, and judging from that pout,
There's serious PMS we can't rule out.
In time, this patient could be really fine,
If he just rests until at least '09.

Thirty Attorneys General Speak Out On Pain Management!

**To: The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)
From: The National Association of Attorneys General**

January 19, 2005

We, the undersigned Attorneys General, write to express our concern about recent DEA actions with respect to prescription pain medication policy and to request a joint meeting with you...

The National Association of Attorneys General in 2003 adopted a Resolution Calling for a Balanced Approach to Promoting Pain Relief and Preventing Abuse of Pain Medications. Both these documents reflected a consensus among law enforcement agencies, health care practitioners, and patient advocates that the prevention of drug abuse is an important societal goal that can and should be pursued without hindering proper patient care. The [DEA Pain Guidelines] issued in 2004 appeared to be consistent with these principles, so we were surprised when they were withdrawn. The Interim Policy published on November 16, 2004 emphasizes enforcement, and seems likely to have a chilling effect on physicians engaged in the legitimate practice of medicine...

We have learned that adequate pain management is often difficult to obtain because many physicians fear investigations and enforcement actions if they prescribe adequate levels of opioids or have many patients with prescriptions for pain medications. We are working to address these concerns while ensuring that individuals who do divert or abuse drugs are prosecuted...

We hope that together we can find ways to prevent abuse and diversion without infringing on the legitimate practice of medicine or exerting a chilling effect on the willingness of physicians to treat patients who are in pain... We hope to meet with you soon.

Sincerely,

Attorneys General of:

Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia

www.CommonSenseDrugPolicy.org, www.DrugWarFacts.org

Mike Gray, Chair; Robert Field, Co-Chair

See the full letter at www.csdp.org/naagletter.htm

In Fact . . .

SO MUCH FOR THE UN 'SCANDAL'

■ From our UN correspondent Ian Williams: The “biggest financial scandal in the history of mankind,” as Fred Barnes of the *Weekly Standard* put it, is ending with a whimper, not a bang. On March 29 Paul Volcker’s inquiry into the UN’s Oil for Food program cleared UN Secretary General Kofi Annan of using his influence to award an inspection contract to Cotecna, the company that had employed his son Kojo. It did reprimand the Secretary General for not having had a more thorough investigation when the allegations were first made in 1999; it accused Kojo and Cotecna of lying both to the elder Annan and the investigators about their continuing relationship; and it rapped over the knuckles the head of the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services for employing a Singaporean compatriot with Oil for Food program money. (Oddly enough, this is the very body it says Annan should have tapped to investigate the allegations against him in 1999.) Volcker referred to how thoroughly “scrubbed” the UN had been by his inquiry, and his exoneration should free Annan to carry on with his UN reform package—except that the people who invented the “scandal” will not go away so easily. For them, Volcker’s judicious “no evidence” of wrongdoing by Kofi Annan is simply evidence of lack of assiduity on the inquiry’s part. For conservatives like Representative Henry Hyde and Senator Norm Coleman, the UN and Annan are always guilty, and it is just a case of finding a new occasion to say so. But the tables could turn yet on the UN-bashers. Volcker promised that his panel’s final report this summer will examine the part played by diplomats on the sanctions committee and the Security Council and their governments in the Oil for Food program. That should be interesting, since the panel will reveal Washington’s benign indifference to Saddam’s oil sales to neighboring states, reported to Congress and ignored, and will reveal how every contract within the program was scrutinized in Washington. It will also be very interesting to see whether the Administration opens its books to Volcker in the way that Hyde and his colleagues insisted the UN must do for Congress—and whether the American media will pay attention to the results.

INDIA BACKS OFF AIDS MEDS

■ Esther Kaplan writes: Rushing to meet a deadline for TRIPS compliance, the Indian Parliament recently passed a patent law that dispensed with, as a Pfizer lobbyist put it, “the utopian concept that every invention should be as free as air or water.” From 1970 India had patented only manufacturing processes not products, which allowed a generic drug industry to develop—one that now provides HIV medicines to more than half those being treated in the developing world. The World Health Organization’s ambitious goal to get 3 million people with AIDS on treatment by the end of this year could never have been imagined without these low-cost Indian generics. Indian producers like Cipla did much more to revolutionize AIDS treatment access than slashing prices by up to 95 percent; they also combined drugs patented by competing pharmaceutical companies into a single, easy-to-take pill. India’s new bill has put all this in jeopardy. Protests across India, and as far afield as Uganda and France, fueled a

last-minute intervention by Communist Party members of the Congress-led governing coalition, who succeeded in amending the bill’s worst provisions—allowing, most important, continued production of generics already on the market. But after an invasion of lobbyists representing major Western drug makers, the law became dangerously tilted toward patent protection rather than public health: One provision imposes royalty payments on existing generics, which could dramatically hike costs, and another protects new drugs from compulsory licensing for at least three and a half years, a fatal wait for people with AIDS whose first drug combination is failing. “The 2001 Doha Declaration claimed that TRIPS could be implemented in a way that protects people’s health,” said Rachel Cohen of Médecins sans Frontières. “The implementation of this law, in a country that has played such a unique role in producing quality generics, will put that claim to the test.” Much depends on Indian resistance from groups like Mumbai’s Affordable Medicines and Treatment Campaign, which has vowed to challenge patent applications of public health significance, and on countries like Brazil, which must be pushed to supply generic HIV meds outside its borders.

BLAIR’S ILLEGAL WAR

■ Still another debate about the Iraq War is simmering in Britain, with an election under way. New information recently surfaced suggesting that the Blair government lied to Parliament—and the nation—when it claimed during the debate on the eve of the invasion that the war was legal under UN Security Council Resolution 1441. (The United States made an identical claim; France and other Security Council members argued that a second resolution, authorizing military action, was necessary.) The new information is contained in a partly declassified letter of resignation written by Elizabeth Wilmshurst, a deputy legal adviser to the Foreign Office, on the eve of the invasion. She protested that the incursion was not authorized by Resolution 1441 and would be a “crime of aggression.” The BBC released a censored passage from the letter in which Wilmshurst says Attorney General Lord Goldsmith told Prime Minister Blair confidentially on March 7, 2003, that the war would be illegal unless there was a second resolution. Later, during the parliamentary debate, Lord Goldsmith issued a public statement that the war was legal without a second resolution. This opinion from the government’s highest law officer was decisive for many MPs who voted for invading Iraq. Now Lord Goldsmith denies he held any other view than the one he gave to Parliament or that he changed his mind under pressure. Still, the revelations could intensify the feelings of many in Britain that the government lied. Note that Colin Powell made the same argument as Goldsmith to the UN, and to this day Bush claims (when it suits him) that the war was waged to bring Iraq into compliance with Resolution 1441. But as Kofi Annan subsequently said, the war was “illegal” under the UN Charter.

ON THE WEB

■ Read Alisa Solomon’s report on Jeremy Hinzman, the American soldier who recently lost the first round in his Canadian asylum bid (www.thenation.com).



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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Death, Depression and Prozac

Jeff Weise, teen slayer of ten, including himself, at the Red Lake Indian reservation in northern Minnesota, was on Prozac, prescribed by some doc.

The minute the high command at Eli Lilly, manufacturer of Prozac, saw those news stories about Weise you can bet they went into crisis mode, and only began to relax when Weise's web surfs of neo-Nazi sites took over the headlines. Hitler trumps Prozac every time, particularly if it's an Injun teen ranting about racial purity.

How many times, amid the carnage of such homicidal sprees, do investigators find a prescription for antidepressants at the murder scene? Luvox at Columbine, Prozac at Louisville, Kentucky, where Joseph Wesbecker killed nine, including himself. You'll find many such stories in the past fifteen years.

By now the Lilly defense formula is pretty standardized: self-righteous handouts about the company's costly research and rigorous screening, crowned by the imprimatur of that watchdog for the public interest, the FDA. And of course there's the bogus comfort of numbers; if Lilly's pill factory had a big sign like McDonald's, it could boast PROZAC: MILLIONS SERVED.

Each burst in the sewage pipe brings a new challenge to Lilly's sales force, which has had some heavy hitters down the years, including George Herbert Walker Bush (onetime member of the Lilly board of directors); former Enron CEO Ken Lay (onetime member of the board); George W. Bush's former director of the Office of Management and Budget, Mitch Daniels (a former senior vice president); George W. Bush's Homeland Security Advisory Council member Sidney Taurel (a Lilly CEO); and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (a recipient of Lilly funding).

At the turn of this year there was a five-alarm incident when the *British Medical Journal* went back to the 1994 Wesbecker suit against Lilly, reminding the world that the company had been involved in some shifty footwork involving a backdoor payoff to the plaintiffs. The deal successfully excluded from Judge John Potter's courtroom the regulatory case history of Oraflex, a highly compromised Lilly product, which displayed the company's submissions to the FDA in a disgusting light.

Lilly rose to the challenge, successfully persuading gullible journalists that the real story concerned a lonely freelancer writing for *BMJ* and not a powerful pharmaceutical company with a huge advertising budget. The press dutifully shifted its focus from Lilly's outrageous efforts to suppress evidence to the narrow question of whether a piece of evidence had really been in the public record in the years since 1997, when Judge Potter changed his verdict to "dismissed with prejudice as settled," very far from the victory Lilly had been claiming.

Long years of rigorous testing? When Fred Gardner and I investigated the selling of depression and Prozac in the mid-1990s, we found that clinical trials excluded suicidal patients, children and the elderly—although once FDA approval was granted, the drug could be prescribed for anyone. According to Dr. Peter Breggin, the well-known psychiatrist who analyzed the FDA's approval



of Prozac, it was ultimately based on three studies indicating that fluoxetine relieved some symptoms of depression more effectively than a placebo, and in the face of nine studies indicating no positive effect. Only sixty-three patients were on fluoxetine for more than two years (fluoxetine hydrochloride was branded as Prozac in the mid-1970s). By 1988 the National Institute of Mental Health had not only put the government stamp of approval on corporate-funded depression research but had created a mechanism whereby government money and personnel

could be employed to stimulate demand for corporate products.

Psychiatrists, a breed whose adepts commit suicide at twice the rate of other doctors (so stated a study published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* in 1980), have been central to the entire enterprise. The process linking their sorcery to the corporate bottom line has a robust simplicity to it. As Prozac came off Lilly's research bench and headed for the mass production line, psychiatrists labored to formulate a multitude of bogus pathologies to be installed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, whose chief editor in the 1980s was Dr. Robert Spitzer, an orgone-box veteran and copywriter skilled at minting new ailments for late-twentieth-century America, sanctioning treatment, medication, state funding for the requisite pills (no expensive consultative therapy) and reimbursement by insurance companies.

When detailed research showed likely linkage of Prozac to violent acts, lily-livered psychiatrists were there to douse the flames of doubt. In 1991 the FDA's Psychopharmacologic Drugs Advisory Committee met to decide whether Prozac should carry a warning label about links to suicide. Five out of the ten panel members (eight of whom were shrinks) had active financial interests in the drugs the committee was investigating, and all voted against requiring a warning, their obvious conflicts duly sanitized by the toothless FDA. Other shrinks in the hire of the drug companies urged ever wider application of Prozac to remedy social angst, including plans for compulsory Prozac-dosing of youngsters.

In 2000, when hundreds of farmers in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh were committing suicide because of neoliberal policies that had destroyed their livelihoods, the state government announced it was sending out a team of shrinks to determine why the farmers were depressed. The implication was that these people were mentally unstable. But in India credulity about the causes of depression is not so far advanced. The plan provoked a storm of ridicule, and in the elections that followed the Andhra Pradesh government, darling of Western neoliberals, was duly trounced.

No such happy chance in the United States, where government is in the pay of drug companies and prescriptions for antidepressants have long since taken over from political manifestoes that would cure depression by collective social action. How they must have cheered at Eli Lilly when the Senate wiped out Chapter 7 of the bankruptcy statutes, fostering family violence, heightened crime and a vast new potential market for Prozac and kindred potions at the stroke of a pen. ■

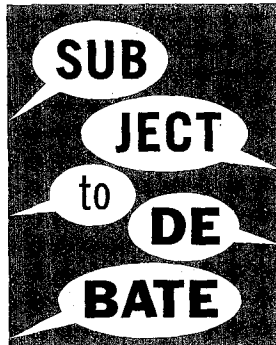
KATHA POLLITT

Backward Christian Soldiers

Maybe, just maybe, the religious right and its Republican friends have finally gone too far with the Terri Schiavo case. Americans may tell pollsters the earth was created in six days flat and dinosaurs shared the planet with Adam and Eve, but I don't believe they want Tom DeLay to be their personal physician. I don't think they want fanatics moaning and praying outside the hospital while they're making hard decisions. I don't think they want people getting arrested trying to "feed" their comatose relatives, or issuing death threats against judges and spouses in the name of "life." I don't think John Q. Public wants Jeb Bush to adopt his wife or Newt Gingrich to call her by her first name or Senator Frist to diagnose her by video, or Jesse Jackson to pop in at the last minute for a prayer and a photo-op.

The Terri Schiavo freak show is so deeply crazy, so unhinged, such a brew of religiosity and hypocrisy and tabloid sensationalism, just maybe it is clueing people in to where the right's moral triumphalism is leading us. Before Congress jumped into the act, Republicans may have seen a great opportunity to paint the Democrats as the "party of death." No thanks to the Dems, who mostly cowered, the stratagem backfired: The weekend after Schiavo's feeding tube was withdrawn, 75 percent of Americans told CBS pollsters they wanted government to stay out of end-of-life issues, and 82 percent thought Congress and the President should have kept away. Jesse Jackson seems not to have gotten the memo—he's calling for the Florida legislature to overturn thirty years of carefully crafted medical ethics and pass a previously rejected bill requiring patients in a persistent vegetative state to remain on life support forever, unless they've left a written directive to the contrary. If that's the "religious left," forget it.

It's about time Americans woke up. The Schiavo case only looks unprecedented: For decades, women seeking to terminate pregnancies have faced gantlets of screamers, invasions of privacy, violence in the name of "saving babies," charges of murder and of evil motives, politically motivated legal obstacles, spurious medical "expertise" (abortion causes breast cancer; Terri Schiavo just needs therapy). There is the same free-floating vitriol: Abortion is the "Silent Holocaust," while, according to Peggy Noonan, those who support Ms. Schiavo's right to die are on "a low road that twists past Columbine and leads toward Auschwitz" (that would be the same road that Tom DeLay and his family went down when they withheld life support from his critically injured father—the same road, in fact, that Robert Schindler, Terri's father, took when he turned off his mother's life support). Randall Terry, the Operation Rescue showman who wants to make America a "Christian nation" and to "execute" doctors who perform abortions, is the Schindlers' chief strategist; other Operation Rescuers in the hospice parking lot include the Rev. Pat Mahoney, who freely gives out Michael Schiavo's home address; Cheryl Sullenger, who served two years for conspiring to bomb an abortion clinic in 1987; and Scott Heldreth, a convicted sex offender who told an AP re-



porter that driving long hours to the hospice and getting arrested was all his 10-year-old son's idea.

In this transposition of the abortion drama, Terri Schiavo is the defenseless fetus; her husband, Michael, is the callous "convenience" aborter; and the Schindlers are the would-be adoptive couple doomed to childlessness by tyrannical judges. But there's a difference. Abortion happens to women—bad girls, sluts. Because of the shame and secrecy around abortion, you can believe, probably wrongly, that you don't know anyone who's had one and, thanks to

your virtuous life, that you would never need one yourself. But anyone can fall into a permanent coma, and death comes to us all. Millions of people have had to make end-of-life decisions for loved ones or for themselves; they've had to think about what a life is—a pulse? a reflex? a thought?—and what a person is, and what that person would have wanted. And because of this collective experience, most Americans know that to "err on the side of life," as the enthusiastic death-penalty fan and Medicaid-cutter George W. Bush advises, is just a slogan. Your wife with Alzheimer's who's stopped eating and drinking is alive. Do you intubate or not? Your father in a stroke-induced coma is alive. Do you treat his pneumonia or see it as "the old man's friend"? When do you go for aggressive treatment, when do you let the person go, when do you decide the person has already gone and only their body is there in the bed? Over three decades, Americans won the right to make these painful, intimate decisions for themselves. That right—not disability rights or the possibility of medical miracles—is what is at stake in the Schiavo case. Most people, especially young people like Terri Schiavo, are never going to write living wills: Should no weight at all be given their spoken wishes or the conviction of their loved ones that, like Tom DeLay's father, they "would never have wanted to live like this"?

For many ordinary Americans, the stem cell debate was the first time the religious right strove to deprive them of something valuable. It's one thing to make women pay for sex with childbirth, or to deprive your children of modern scientific education, or to ostracize homosexuals, but it's going too far to value a frozen embryo more than Cousin Jim with Parkinson's. Now, with the Schiavo case, Americans have another opportunity to ask themselves if they really want to live in Randall Terry's world, where the next Michael and Terri Schiavo could be anyone of us.

* * *

The Bosnian war is over, but for children who lost family and homes, the trauma continues. In what is now a *Nation* tradition, the Bosnian Initiative Frankfurt is again asking readers to help fund its summer camp for Bosnian children of all ethnicities: \$130 makes you a "godparent," funding one child for a two-week stay, but donations of all sizes are welcome. This year, BIF hopes to expand its highly successful program bringing Israeli and Palestinian kids together. Please make out checks to: Bosnian Initiative Frankfurt and mail them to me at The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. I'll forward them, with many thanks. ■

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Larry David is a longstanding Nation reader.

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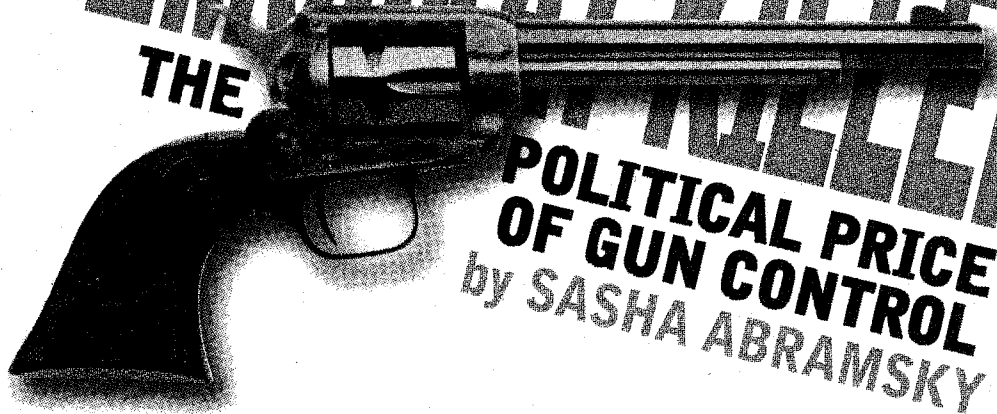
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DEMOCRAT KILLER?

THE POLITICAL PRICE OF GUN CONTROL

by SASHA ABRAMSKY



Shannon Robinson is an unlikely prototype of a twenty-first-century opinion shaper. With disheveled gray hair, a ruddy face, a voice gravelly from years of chain-smoking Marlboros and a habit of sipping translucent maté tea from a thermos through a silver straw, Robinson looks more like a down-and-out prizefighter than a cutting-edge politician. Yet this 57-year-old is a Democratic state senator in New Mexico, and he informally heads a group of state politicians who call themselves the Bull Moosers. When an issue that the members of this caucus care about comes up for a vote in the Santa Fe Capitol, they signal its importance by putting their fingers up to their ears and imitating the antlers on a male moose. Bills to do with hunting, fishing, guns, trucks, boats, ranching and such are routinely greeted by a raising of the antlers.

The Bull Moosers are a potent alliance of rural representatives, many of them Hispanic, and politicians, like Robinson, from poorer city districts (Robinson represents an impoverished, heavily immigrant and crime-ridden neighborhood in Albuquerque). "Not many people care much about my part of town," says Robinson, in between maté sips. "But these folks to ranchers and the guys with boots on, I pay a lot of attention to that. I'm the number-one Bull Moose. One of those old stags. Got some chipped-off antlers."

One of the Bull Moosers' signature issues is opposition to gun control. For close to a decade, Robinson pushed for a concealed-carry law in the state, allowing residents to apply for permits to carry hidden guns. This year, with support from Democratic Governor—and talked-about 2008 presidential candidate—Bill Richardson, the law finally passed. Sponsored by Robinson, concealed carry was defended on the floor of the Statehouse by Democratic caucus chair John Heaton, a retired pharmacist from rural Eddy County, as well as Judiciary Committee chairman Joseph Cervantes—a young and rising star within New Mexico Democratic politics.

It was in many ways symbolic; only about 2,500 concealed-carry permits have been issued, and most of those are for the ruggedly remote rural areas of the state where, in practice, police have long turned a blind eye to people carrying concealed weaponry illegally. Nonetheless, Heaton, a tall, tanned man with a shock of gray hair parted down the left side and a kindly, grandfatherly face—a Norman Rockwell image brought to life—believes the bill's passage was important. Fear that Democrats will restrict gun rights "is a major background issue with voters in the West, particularly in New Mexico," a state with the country's largest shooting range (the Whittington Center, in the northern town of Raton) and about 40,000 National Rifle Association members, the representative states. "Guns reflect the independence, and the independent nature, of the people of the West, and restrictions on certain rights don't play very well. Frankly, being able to take that issue off the table makes a huge difference. There are many, many of my constituents who vote that issue by itself. I know people who are registered Democrats who vote Republican because they don't think there's any consistency on guns. At a national level they simply won't vote for a Democratic candidate. There has to be overt action by Democrats to demonstrate that they are not opposed to guns, in fact support them and the civil use of them."

A September 2002 poll published in the *Albuquerque Journal* found that 57 percent of New Mexicans supported allowing people who had completed a training program to carry concealed guns. Other polls suggested, not surprisingly, that a majority of urban residents in the state opposed concealed carry, while a strong majority of rural residents supported it. Since Democrats already do well in the population centers of Albuquerque and Santa Fe, it is these rural New Mexicans—Bull Moose by temperament, reared on stories of homesteading and gun-toting self-reliance, and living in areas scores of miles from the nearest law-enforcement officers—whom the Democrats have to woo to win back the state in national elections.

"Out here we have long stretches of eighty, ninety, 100 miles where there's nothing between towns," explains 64-year-old retired attorney Frank Witt, who lives on a ranch outside the southern New Mexico desert community of Carlsbad. His wife carries a Magnum in her car in case she breaks down far from the nearest population center and is menaced by a stranger on the road.

Witt votes Democratic down the line in state elections and claims to have contributed \$15,000 to local and state candidates in 2004. But, he says, until the Democrats stop advocating national gun-control legislation, he will neither vote for national Democratic candidates nor give any money to the national party. "On health issues and economic issues and 75 percent of the issues, I would agree with the Democratic philosophy," he declares in a sonorous bass voice. "I think [having only] a 15 percent tax on dividends is a hell of a subsidy for rich people. I think Democrats, if they'd wise up and focus on issues of importance rather than stupid gun-control issues, would find they weren't disenfranchising all the sportsmen and people like myself. We would strongly support the Democrats. I understand they represent my interests. Without a doubt I do. By golly, leave me alone [on guns] and do some of the issues that are constructive, and I'll be behind you 100 percent."

No less a figure than Governor Richardson agrees with Heaton on the importance of cultivating voters such as Witt. A large man sitting in a small office, wearing a brown suede vest and heavy, battered boots, Richardson clearly revels in his image as the quintessential Westerner. "You have to talk about guns in the context of lifestyle, recreation, a way of life," the Governor argues, "rather than as just a measure to prevent murders and deaths. Democrats need to move into a void in the West. The Bush Administration is scaring off recreationists, hunters and fishermen because of their extreme anti-environmental policies. It's important to build alliances with these ranchers and fishermen and broaden the dialogue. The West is becoming more fertile Democratic territory. It's important for Democrats on the East Coast not to make the gun issue a litmus test."

Proponents of gun control are dismayed by these political developments, citing evidence that New Mexico, in addition to having the open landscape that so lures gun enthusiasts, also has the nation's second-highest per capita homicide rate as well as a youth suicide rate twice the national average—two-thirds of these suicides are carried out with guns, most of which belong to the family of the victim. They also produce statistics (disputed by the pro-gun lobby) showing that concealed-carry laws don't help protect law-abiding civilians from violent crime, and they point out that one of the few gun-control successes in recent years was the assault-weapons ban, which, until it expired last year, helped keep extremely potent weaponry off America's streets while not limiting hunters' rights to own less powerful

arms. "They're not good for public safety, and they're not good for public health," says Bill Jordan of New Mexico Voices for Children. "People don't want them, but there's a powerful gun lobby. And that's very sad."

Yet New Mexico's gun-control advocates admit they have lost the debate in their state. They say they would rather spend their time and political capital fighting for things like expanded health insurance coverage—issues they feel offer them a better chance of winning and thus producing real improvements in people's lives. Stick with gun control, and they lose the ability to win on other issues; let the gun-control language go dormant, and, they believe, few people will bolt the party because of it—after all, where else could they park themselves politically?—but some who had previously bolted might be lured back into the fold.

"When the handwriting is on the wall," explains Albuquerque State Representative and gun-control supporter Gail Beam, "there's nothing to be done. I do see it as a do-or-die issue, and yet my position was dead. I was really outnumbered. It wasn't close." Her colleague State Senator Dede Feldman goes further. "We've had the debate, and lost."

Now, Feldman says resignedly, it's time "to concentrate on issues where you can get traction and mileage—such as healthcare in New Mexico, where you have a huge number

without insurance. Don't play defense. Play offense with new ideas and issues, on healthcare, on economic development from the bottom up."

It's hard not to sympathize with their position. After all, what's the point in staking the moral and intellectual high ground on gun control, as I believe gun-control proponents have done, if in doing so you lose the larger war for political power and the ability to enact all the other aspects of your program?

Perhaps that trade-off would be worth it if gun-control laws would drastically limit the availability of deadly weapons; but with hundreds of millions of guns already in circulation in the United States, in practice, absent the forced disarmament of tens of millions of people, gun-control legislation may be more a gesture of political disgust at the gun industry than a transformative societal intervention. A few years ago the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) estimated there were 215 million guns in circulation; the National Academy of Sciences put the number at 258 million. Last year the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that from 2000 to 2003, there were more than 30 million "approved transfers" of guns (new and used). Close to forty states now have right-to-carry laws requiring handgun permits to be issued to all qualified applicants. Stop all gun sales tomorrow, and you'd still have a population better supplied with guns than many armies. Require the most thorough background checks possible, and, while you may lower the number of people shot dead by other people wielding legally purchased weapons, you'd still have to deal with a black market so flush with guns that it would be almost impossible to fully rein in.

In fact, when the numbers are examined, it could be argued that even the assault-weapons ban—the crown jewel of gun-control legislation—was largely symbolic. An unpublished

The West is becoming more fertile Democratic territory. It's important...not to make the gun issue a litmus test.'

—Gov. Bill Richardson

Sasha Abramsky is a freelance journalist in California. He is the author of *Hard Time Blues* (St. Martin's) and an upcoming book on voting rights due out from the New Press in 2006.

CHINESE GOVERNMENT IGNITING WORLD'S BIGGEST GOLD RUSH

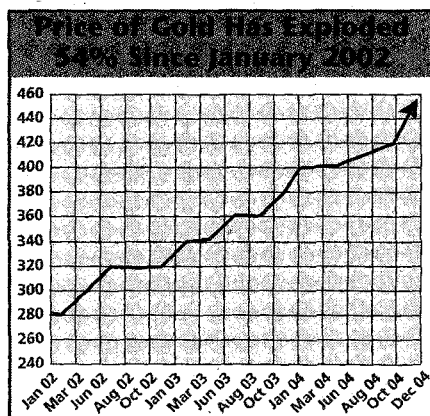
GOLD COIN OWNERSHIP IS LEGALIZED FOR FIRST TIME IN OVER 50 YEARS — DEMAND SKYROCKETS

SHANGHAI, China, Thursday 9:05 AM — What happens when 1.2 billion people suddenly have the opportunity to own gold after more than half a century? And what if their country has been minting one of the world's most popular gold coins for years, but they've never had the chance to own it? This is the amazing story unfolding this moment in China, where the government has legalized gold coin ownership for its citizens, the world's largest population.

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Make no mistake, there is a huge pent-up demand for Panda coins in China. Several years ago, China sanctioned its first coin collector show. Chinese citizens had the opportunity to buy a brass Panda coin. Demand was so fierce that lines of eager buyers stretched out the doors and around the block. When it comes to gold, the Chinese are even more fanatical. When the Shanghai Gold Exchange opened for business, Chinese citizens bought 1.2 TONS of gold bars in just *one month!*

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National Institute of Justice report found that when the ban went into effect, in 1994, there were already about 1.5 million such weapons in private hands, but they were used in some 2 percent of gun-related crimes, according to a 2004 *Washington Times* article. The ban alone wouldn't remove the already huge number of such weapons from the streets. The Brady Campaign, in seeking to assuage the fears of opponents, notes in its literature that existing weapons can be kept, unregistered, under a grandfather provision; and, according to such data, it would not prevent the vast majority of shootings (although it might force gangs, whose shooters have increasingly favored automatic weapons, to utilize black-market purchasing more than they currently have to). The recent tragic shooting spree in a Minnesota High School, for example, would not have been prevented by the assault-weapons ban; in fact, according to news reports, the killer, 16-year-old Jeff Weise, used his police officer grandfather's service weapon—a gun that no realistic gun-control legislation would have taken off the streets.

That is not to say that individual gun-control laws, despite their on-the-ground limitations, have not had some measurable, and positive, impact: The Brady Bill's mandating of background checks has likely prevented a number of people from legally buying guns that might have then been used against, say, women who have fled their abusive husbands. And regarding the assault-weapons ban, any reduction in the availability and usage of these deadly carnage-machines is clearly an extremely good thing. Yet Democrats in the Richardson mold increasingly are wondering whether being perceived as the party of gun control exacts an electoral price that is simply too high.

Nationally, as the Democrats do the Electoral College math and realize the rising importance of the mountain and desert West to their presidential hopes, more and more are making this realpolitik calculation. If the South is now virtually unwinnable for national Democratic candidates, the party can craft a new Electoral College majority only if it can figure out how to make significant inroads into this region, into beautiful Open Road states like Nevada and New Mexico that, in 2004, went mildly Republican in the presidential election, while notching up significant victories or maintaining power for local and state Democratic Party politicians. And crafting a new stance on guns seems to a growing number of Democrats to be just the way to do that.

"The problem we have," says one senior Democratic Party strategist in Washington, DC, who declined to be identified, "is that we make gun owners feel like we're different from them, that we think there's something wrong with them. We have to get away from language that sounds like we're stigmatizing gun owners. We have to find a language of our own that's appealing. To the extent that Democrats are saying 'being a member of the NRA puts you out of moral bounds,' that's a problem. To my way of thinking, there is a fundamental question of cultural fit. People in Western states are not going to elect someone who doesn't fit the culture."

Despite the visibility of the Million Mom March and other

gun-control campaigns of recent years, this argument goes, a recasting of the party's stance on gun control is unlikely to result in unmanageable blowback, in significant fracturing of the Democrats' major support base. A pro-gun Democrat who essentially said "guns are a states' rights issue, and if New Yorkers or Californians want to pass gun-control legislation, that's fine, but the party will no longer advocate national gun control laws" might turn off a few die-hard anti-gun activists, but most pro-gun-control Democrats would probably hold their noses and reluctantly accept it.

But is this a slippery slope—today the Democrats cave on guns, tomorrow on gay rights and abortion? As Democrats agonize over how to defuse the so-called "wedge issues"—used by Republicans to such devastating effect in toss-up states like New Mexico and Nevada—and refocus the national debate on economics and access to healthcare as well as other big-ticket items, some are urging politicians to backpedal on many fronts. It is arguable, however, that rethinking guns is not only less morally toxic and less

politically costly than any effort to recalibrate the party's position on abortion or gay rights but could yield far greater political gains. For it is in the South and the Bible-thumping prairie states that the groundswell of religious fundamentalism has made gay marriage and abortion such hot-button issues (despite the Southerner's undoubted attachment to his weaponry). And there are simply too many other tendencies within the contemporary South and rural center of the country pushing voters into the Republican camp to make it easy for a Democrat to win large chunks of either region without abandoning many, if not all, of the party's core principles.

By contrast, it is at least conceivable that in closely divided Western states, where guns seem to excite more across-the-spectrum passion than do abortion and gay rights—notwithstanding the resonance of the conservative "morals" platform in Hispanic Catholic communities—a Democrat could win with a traditional Democratic message on most issues fused with a new rhetoric around the Second Amendment. Howard Dean's elevation to head of the DNC was made possible at least in part by state party chairs such as John Wertheim of New Mexico, who liked Dean's states' rights rhetoric around firearms and who believed that gambling on the potency of the gun issue was a chance worth taking.

Democrats will never win, and probably wouldn't want, the support of hard-core Second Amendment literalists who believe individuals have a right to own any and all weapons, from assault guns up to heavy artillery and bombs, with no limitations and no background checks. But they may win, and—in states where the Electoral College outcomes are decided by handfuls of votes—certainly do want, the support of men like "Cross Tie." Cross Tie is a fiftysomething shooter from a village south of Albuquerque who enjoys dressing up in nineteenth-century costume (his name, like those of other cowboy shooters, is an alias dug out of Western history books), driving out to the range and taking part in period cowboy shooting contests, but

Howard Dean's elevation to DNC head was made possible in part by Westerners who liked Dean's states' rights rhetoric around firearms.

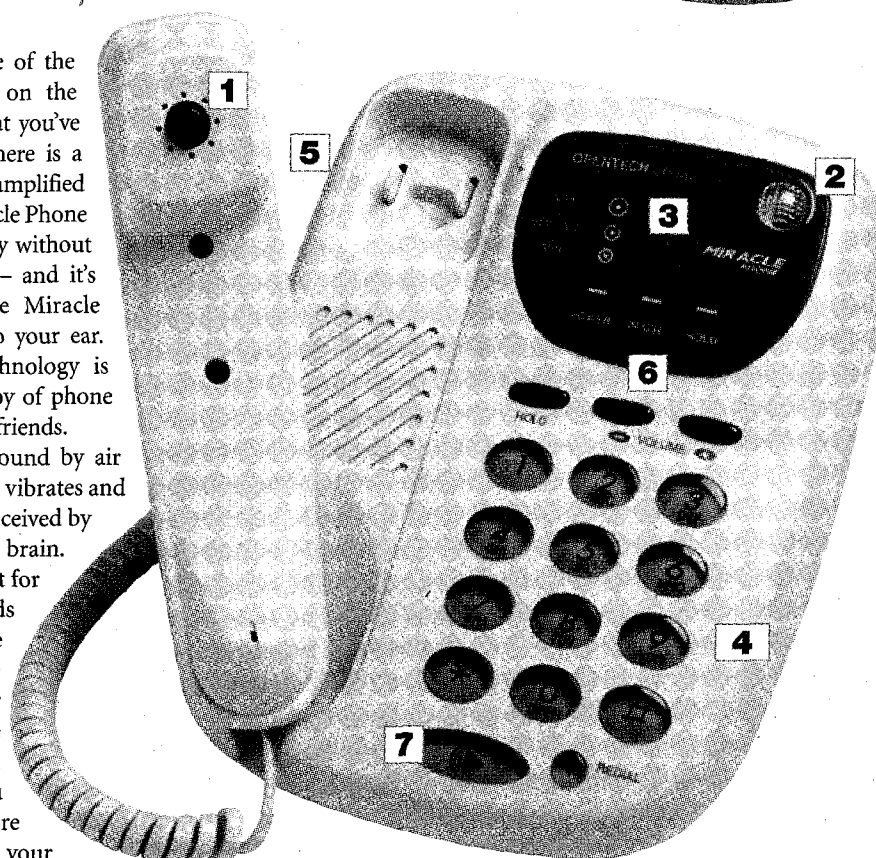
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who also supports background checks on gun buyers and laws requiring adults to lock guns away from children—the only sort of legislation that conceivably could have prevented the recent Minnesota carnage. “There’s a very low level of trust [of Democrats] now in the gun community,” he says. Yet, were that trust to be re-established, Cross Tie, who works at a local Air Force base, says he might be prepared to vote Democrat.

Coastal Democrats and representatives from big cities may not like the pro-gun-ownership arguments or understand the emotional allure of the shooting range, but unlike in the 1990s, in the post-2004 environment a growing number are unwilling to go out on a limb and risk alienating potential party supporters over this issue. Last year Kerry put on camouflage gear and paraded with his guns on a duck hunt; yet he was hobbled by the perception that his party still advocated a one-size-fits-all national gun-control strategy. In the lead-in to the 2008 elections, it is that perception that these Second Amendment Democrats want to squash. Once Democrats are able to reassure Westerners that they will not take their guns away, say pro-gun lobbyists such as the self-proclaimed “ultra liberal” Linda Siegle, then, and only then, can they return to the issues of reining in sales of assault weapons, expanding background checks on buyers and passing laws requiring parents to keep weapons locked away so children can’t access them—issues even most gun supporters sympathize with.

And, as issues dear to Western culture take center stage in the remaking of the Democratic Party, so Western politicians are also rising to the fore. Not only did Nevada Senator Harry Reid recently ascend as Senate minority leader but Governor Richardson is widely talked about as a leading contender for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination.

Richardson is one of four Democrats to win Mountain West governorships since 2000, all in states—Arizona, Wyoming, Montana and New Mexico—that voted for Bush in 2004. Last year Democrats won back control over the Colorado and Montana legislatures; held on to power in New Mexico (where there are 1.5 registered Democrats for every Republican); and made significant inroads in Nevada, where a minimum-wage initiative was passed over strong Republican opposition.

In other words, at the local level Western Democrats have found a winning formula during the Bush presidency, stressing issues like health insurance, the environment, quality of life, careful management of scarce water resources and investment in high-tech job creation. Howard Dean’s challenge is to craft a national agenda that resonates with Westerners in the same way; that creates a vibrant coastal/urban-interior/rural coalition of interests; and that challenges the GOP on the bread-and-butter issues that the governing oligarchs are most vulnerable on while neutralizing GOP attempts to divert attention by focusing on wedge issues such as guns.

True, in 2000 Al Gore was far more of a gun-control advocate than Kerry was in 2004; and Gore won New Mexico while Kerry lost it. But Gore won during a time of peace, riding on Clinton’s coattails. He won despite his position on guns, not

because of it. Could he have won in 2004? Doubtful. On the other hand, could a convincingly pro-gun Democrat have won the state in 2004? Possibly.

“The Democrats could stand to modify their stance,” says Doug “Jack Diamond” Kunz, a retired security systems electrician and cowboy shooting enthusiast. Unlike most of his friends on the Albuquerque shooting range, Kunz voted for Kerry in 2004, but he did so with strong reservations about the party’s gun policies. “I’m in the middle where common sense resides,” he says. “No, we shouldn’t have total gun control. On the other hand, I don’t believe we need to have fancy assault weapons.”

One longtime inside player in Santa Fe, a larger-than-life shmoozer whose family has been at the forefront of state politics for close to half a century, always as Democrats, admitted to voting for Bush in 2004 because of the gun issue. If word got out

on how he voted, he says half joking, “my dad would probably shoot me between the eyes. The one thing the Republicans have done real well is to cultivate local gun

If, as expected, Democrats create a regional primary, the West will become a key factor in determining the party’s next presidential candidate.

networks—through the NRA, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Trout Unlimited. You’ve got to get to the sportsmen. The Republicans have been real good at working through these institutions at a grassroots level. That’s where it’s got to start.”

It would take only a few thousand such voters to change their votes in New Mexico and Nevada for a Democratic presidential candidate to win both those states; and while Colorado and Montana are harder nuts to crack, they are certainly on the party’s radar. Win three of these four states, or win two of them plus Iowa, and the Democrats have an Electoral College majority again.

As a part of the woo-the-West strategy, the Democratic Party recently set up a commission that explored the possibility of creating a Western regional primary early in the primary season—a single day on which the West as a bloc would flex its political muscle. If, as is widely expected, the proposal is approved later this year, overnight the West will become a key factor in determining the party’s next presidential nominee. Such a move would, not coincidentally, probably give a major boost to Richardson’s presidential ambitions.

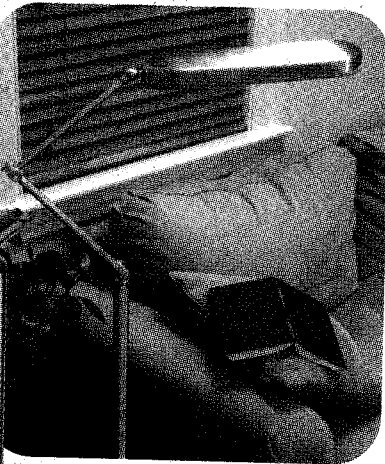
A Western regional primary, says Richardson, “would mean the presidential candidate would have to be attuned to Western issues—and the gun issue would be important. It would force candidates to confront the gun issue more realistically, instead of just a blanket opposition. The core issues are access to health-care, jobs and job protection, education. These are Democratic core issues. The gun issue? It should not be a litmus test. Because there are more and more Democrats who support the Second Amendment.”

“Richardson’s a very politically astute individual,” says Robert Goode, NRA regional representative for West Texas and New Mexico. “He knows you’re beating your head against a wall when you go after the firearms issue. And he backs his words with his votes.” Goode continues that, if a candidate like Richardson ran for the presidency, he believes the NRA

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would step back and not take a partisan stance on the election. Goode's colleague Charles Weisleder, a 70-year-old NRA lobbyist, agrees. "Richardson," says Weisleder, a bald man smiling broadly over coffee at an Albuquerque Shoney's, "got a lot of gun votes because of what he said to us. A lot of people are driven by the firearms issue."

Shannon Robinson believes the Democrats would have won the last presidential election—would have certainly won New Mexico, with its five Electoral College votes—if the wedge issue of guns had been successfully neutralized. "Folks need to understand that we need to fight issues that are significant to why people are Democrats," the Bull Mooser asserts. "The Democratic Party is the party of inclusion. Bush's latest budget

has a very predictable effort to let people know 'you're on your own. You're not going to get help from the federal government.' The Democrats are the group trying to create success for all Americans."

Quite simply, says Robinson, lighting another cigarette with the smoldering butt of the one just smoked, the stakes are too high to let an issue like guns rob Democrats of Electoral College votes in a state like New Mexico. "This is real," he exclaims as he details the way in which he wants the party to get on-message. "We're playing for the ability to rule the world. And what we have on the line is the conscience of the world, which is aghast that we had an election and didn't discuss the new imperialism that Bush's people have played us into." ■

Letter From Jerusalem

by Amy Wilentz

THE WALL AGAINST PEACE

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Yoav Weiss is an Israeli artist with a moneymaking idea. That is, his idea will make money when the time comes, if the time should ever come. Weiss has gone around Jerusalem with a couple of cans of spray paint and a few stencils, marking off some sections of the monolithic separation wall that the Israelis have constructed around and through the city. But Weiss is not like some people, who've painted such slogans as FROM THE WARSAW GHETTO TO THE ABU DIS GHETTO or THIS WALL WILL SOON FALL. His work is not predictive or sentimental or strident.

Instead, Weiss has outlined curving sections of the wall, gentle organic shapes that have nothing to do with its gigantic, harsh geometry. He's numbered them and has created a website on which he's selling off the pieces to an international market. So far he's sold about fifteen sections, at about \$5 per square meter. "It's pretty cheap for what they are getting," Weiss says. "For example, your piece could be used as furniture. If you attach legs to your section, you can make a very impressive coffee table. Or, if you reserve a few sections, you can build a wall for yourself in your garden, say, as a conversation piece, or if you have a disagreement with your neighbor."

I ask him if he's speaking ironically. He says no.

"You can say the wall is repugnant, if you look at it from a moral point of view," Weiss says. "But if you look at it as an artwork, it's impressive. Like Richard Serra or Christo, or the Great Wall of China. As a piece of sculpture, it has quite an impact, beyond the moral, human and environmental impact. I'm not trying to make a political statement. I'm just trying to make a buck." Yoav's work is charming and whimsical, yet he would be the first to agree: Across the barrier, on the other side, whimsy is not an element in people's approach to the wall.

Amy Wilentz, a Nation contributing editor who writes frequently about the Middle East, is the author of Martyrs' Crossing (Ballantine), a novel about Jerusalem.

The city has been dark this winter. During the past four years, as people like Weiss have abandoned Jerusalem for less besieged parts, the city's religious quarters have expanded in all directions. *Streimels*, the holiday hats worn by ultra-Orthodox Jews, bob like flying saucers down the avenues. Tire-burning demonstrations of angry settlers close important arteries; the town's circulation is blocked. Downtown, outside a mall and office complex on King George Street, the public clock is six hours ahead of the correct time, or, as an Israeli friend of mine says, you could see it as six hours behind.

Female yeshiva students walk purposefully through the streets in their long skirts and severe shoes, the boys in their too-short pants, playing with their sidecurls. Stores run by women stay open late into the evening, fluorescent lights beckoning. The city's back is up, even though the second intifada is over, and even though in Ramallah, twenty minutes away, the body of Yasir Arafat lies under scores of brightly colored wreaths sent by the international community.

Yes, he's dead, finally, but Jerusalem—pardon me, "Jerusalem, the eternal and undivided capital of Israel"—is prepared and still preparing for the worst. The worst is something it is familiar with. Peace, it is not familiar with.

In Jerusalem these days, grand political statements are left to the writers, while the politicians squabble over strategy and minutiae, both political and military. The Jerusalem International Book Fair opened this winter with a speech by David Grossman, one of the half-dozen or so Israeli writers, intellectuals and political figures who worked with Palestinian counterparts on the Geneva Accord of 2003; one of those who courageously, stubbornly advocated peace in the midst of the most bitter violence.

"You still remember, dimly, distantly," Grossman said to his audience, "that you aren't living the life you would have liked to live.... You still remember it, but there are many moments when,

out of despair and fear, you start to believe that this madness is the real life.... In this situation, so many Israelis and Palestinians persuade themselves that the people standing before them are evil by nature and evil in essence, a sort of existential, almost cosmic evil, which turns against them out of a pure malice which has no rational justification.... We are so mired in the distortion that we almost do not really register the actual price we are paying for living through four generations now, in a life parallel to the life we could have lived, the life we deserve."

What can writers do? Grossman says that the very act of writing, especially writing fiction, constitutes a rejection of the stupidity and despair of the situation and is a "tiny act of protest, of defiance." Possibly he is right; certainly "tiny" is the notable word. In any case, an event for the book fair called *Voices From Two Sides of the Bridge* turned out to have many of the qualities of good fiction: It was super-real, its development was inexorable and it ended with the kind of finality that gave it meaning and truth.

Planned by the energetic Israeli literary agent Deborah Harris, *Bridge Day* was to be a historic occasion, with Israeli, Palestinian and other Arab writers meeting at the neutral territory of the Sheikh Hussein Bridge, which connects Jordan and Israel up near the Galilee, and engaging in a sort of colloquium that would show that writers, at least, can rise above. The trip from Jerusalem to the bridge had the feel of a lovely holiday outing. At the bridge, small, unassuming signs read *TO JORDAN*. There was also a large duty-free shop and a Best Buy. In the language of the region, these felt very "normalizing."

In the excitement of the historical moment, many Palestinian writers, as well as writers from Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Tunisia and Egypt, had said yes to Harris's bridge invitation. But as reality approached, one by one they called to say they were not coming and to offer their excuses. Apart from the Israelis and three lone Palestinians from the territories, only Palestinian Israelis and Europe-based Arab writers showed up.

"Many of our participants," Harris said, "have come down with an illness." Although the flu was going around, that did not appear to be the illness she was talking about. The illness was fear: fear of being taken for a collaborator, fear of political repercussions in their home countries, fear of some ruse on the part of the Israelis that would humiliate them, fear of being photographed with Israelis. As the Arab-Israeli writer Sayed Kashua said to the audience, "It is not easy to come to such a place and shake the hand of the conqueror when you have been defeated." He said he often wondered whether "my writing is just part of the maneuvering, whether my place is just the place the Israelis have designated for me."

There is another bus tour you can take from Jerusalem. It's Ir Amim's tour of the wall, which Israel has been constructing over the past three years for a multitude of reasons, the most often cited one being security—to keep Palestinians out. But the wall is like a narrative of the Israeli psyche: It's there to keep the Other out, to keep the Jews in, to protect, to secure, to stop terror, to isolate and humiliate the enemy; it's there to grab land and to establish borders unilaterally; it's there to keep the demographic ratio acceptable to the Jewish state. In some ways, the wall can be seen as yet another Israeli

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military incursion into the West Bank. The one good thing about it is that like any other wall, it can come down.

Ir Amim, which means the People's City, is a pro-peace Israeli group that monitors events in the city with an eye toward keeping a two-state solution to the conflict plausible. The tour leader is Amos Gil, executive director of Ir Amim and a well-known Israeli civil and human rights advocate.

Gil says his group is not political, but then he explains the day's itinerary: "We will not leave 'the eternal and undivided capital of Israel' today, but we will visit places 90 percent of Israelis never imagine and never visit." He agrees that he is speaking ironically. What he means by this is that Jerusalem is already very much a divided city, in which the Jewish citizens do not live in or visit or even imagine the Arab side, and the Arabs—except for those lucky enough to be able to find and keep work across the way, in more peaceful times—do not live in or visit or even imagine the Jewish side. Two countries, you might say, after having been to both sides.

The wall could cut off 50,000 East Jerusalem residents from the rest of the city, isolating five Palestinian villages and towns at the northeastern edge simply by encircling them and cutting them off totally from their surroundings. Kafr Aqab, a village at the city's north end, has already been cut off by the wall. The West Bank town of Sheikh Sa'ad was to be utterly sealed off from Jerusalem, which is its only egress, but legal action on the part of Sheikh Sa'ad residents has temporarily delayed construction. One remedy the Israeli authorities contemplated for its 4,000 Palestinian villagers was to put a checkpoint in the wall, which could be open to Jerusalem for forty-five minutes in the morning and forty-five minutes in the evening, a laughably insulting and unworkable suggestion. As it is, almost every Palestinian coming into Jerusalem from elsewhere must already wait longer than that to get in.

The Israelis have come up with many eccentric plans concerning the wall. At the northern edge of the West Bank city of Bethlehem sits Rachel's Tomb, which Moshe Dayan, a secular Jew, did not want after the 1967 war. Idea rejected, with a wave of his imperious hand. But times have changed, and now the wall has been designed to enter Bethlehem and encircle the tomb for the Israeli side because it is a sacrosanct spot to Orthodox Jewry, a force much more powerful in Israeli politics now than it was in Dayan's day. The extension was immediately disputed, and so nothing was erected in the area, leaving a security hole through which a suicide bomber passed in 2004, blowing up a bus in the wealthy, secular Rehavia district of West Jerusalem, killing eleven. Thus, within Israel, the ambitions of the religious conspired, at least in this instance, to permit the killing of the secular.

Or that's how some see it. Laughing in an Israeli way, which means with a dismissive shrug, Gil says it works like this: Every sector has its own suicide bombing. In two attacks less than two weeks apart, commuters and working stiffs, including soldiers, got theirs in the early-morning bus bombings on Jaffa Street in 1996, with forty-five dead. The religious Jews got theirs at a bar

mitzvah celebration up in the religious quarter of Beit Yisrael in 2002, with eleven killed. The media elite got it at Cafe Moment in 2002, with twelve killed. The moms and babies and tourists and average people got it at Sbarro's Pizza, at the busy intersection of King George and Jaffa streets, and at the Ben Yehuda pedestrian mall, in 2001, with a combined twenty-six killed. And each side holds up its own suicide bombings against the others, as if they were part of a fight among Jewish Jerusalemites instead of a running Palestinian commentary on the illegitimacy of the occupation. In the recent Friday night Tel Aviv bombing at the Stage nightclub, as in the 2001 Friday night Tel Aviv bombing at the Dolphinarium disco, secular Jews who were not observing religious Sabbath laws were killed and wounded. At least, that's how very religious Israeli Jews

might view it. To the Palestinian bombers, all the targets are simply this: Israeli, and vulnerable.

Rachel's Tomb is not the only tomb of interest in the area. Another is Arafat's, up in Ramallah. Of course, he wanted to be buried in Jerusalem, but the Israelis nixed that. I meet my friend Hani up at the Kalandia checkpoint. As depressing spots go in the vicinity of Jerusalem, this is a major one. It's dusty and littered, full of idling traffic and waiting taxis. Mothers, children, babies at the breast, old men with walking sticks, doctors, lawyers—all move through a long, fenced-in corridor past young Israeli soldiers who check their papers and bags. A makeshift watchtower sits above the checkpoint, draped in camouflage netting. At the base of the wall on the West Bank side are vegetable stands and trinket stalls. Tea vendors pass by, and peddlers sell clothes, snacks and herbs from strategic positions on the ground. A lot of Palestinian life is lived right here at the checkpoint, as—for long hours—people wait to cross. What is clear is that, with the wall, Israel has effectively Gazafied the West Bank.

Hani takes me over to the Chairman's burial place in Ramallah, inside the Muqata, the headquarters where Arafat had been virtually imprisoned for three years before his unceremonious airlift to a deathbed at a military hospital near Paris. The Muqata, which was shattered by Israeli tank fire in 2001, has been cleaned up substantially since Arafat's death, with a new, glassed-in structure built for the tomb.

At the head of the tomb is a photograph of Arafat with a kaffiyeh draped over it. At the foot is inscribed, in Arabic and English, THE TOMB OF THE LEADER YASIR ARAFAT. I say nothing as we walk away, but Hani turns to me and says, apologizing yet explaining, "All men do wrong in their lives." He voted for Mahmoud Abbas for president in January, and he shows me the ink stain that remains on his thumb from election day. Hani turns his head slightly to one side. "Maybe there will be change," he says. "And maybe it will be good. We can hope..."

Hope is one thing. But an analysis I've heard from a veteran Palestinian observer of the political scene predicts that without substantial and continuous shoring up from the United States and the international community, and visible, palpable, immediate Israeli-inspired improvements in the lives of the Palestinian population, Abbas—cornered politically by corrupt backers and rogue

The Greater Jerusalem settlement expansion is a direct attack on the 'road map' peace plan and the two-state solution to the conflict.

security forces—will fall within the year. His rule is far from secure, and Hamas is expected to do very well in this summer's parliamentary elections. There is a rumor that both the Israelis and the Americans are already holding private talks with Hamas leaders—those who remain, that is, after the 2004 Israeli assassinations of Sheik Ahmed Yassin and Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi.

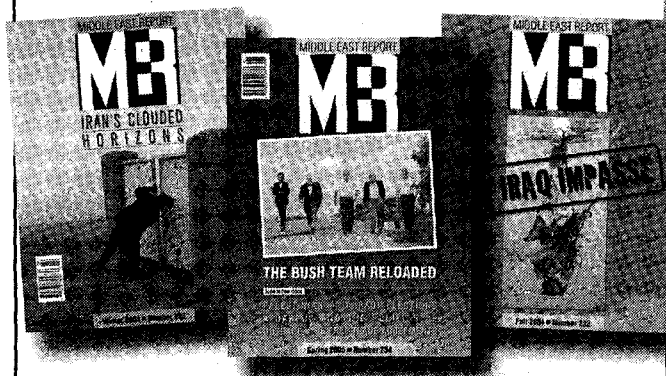
Ramallah itself has little to do with Hamas. It's a Fatah bastion. Hani drives slowly through the bustling center. On the road in and out and in every neighborhood is the campaign poster of the cheerfully smiling Abbas. In a few posters, he is pictured in his suit shoulder to shoulder with the kaffiyeh-crowned Arafat, but more often he isn't. Because a great deal of Abbas's charm for the Palestinian electorate is that he was Arafat's close associate. And a great deal of his appeal for them is also that he is not Arafat.

I drove up to Ma'ale Adumim on a road that is strictly for Israelis. Ma'ale Adumim is a huge suburban settlement a few miles outside Jerusalem. With the construction of the wall, it will soon be inside Jerusalem, surrounded by what is known in wallpeak as the Ma'ale Adumim "bubble." It's another charm added to the bracelet encircling the city, and, with a population of more than 25,000, it is the largest settlement in the occupied territories. With its red tiled roofs and stacked two- and three-story houses, its mall plazas and green roundabouts, Ma'ale Adumim is a typical Israeli suburb, except for its dramatic, windswept, isolated, vertiginous location, from which it looks out over a wide expanse of the West Bank.

At the westernmost edges of Ma'ale Adumim I saw at least four cranes at work on further construction. Recently, to the outrage of Palestinians, the Sharon government announced plans to construct another 3,500 units. If the settlement expands, it will split the West Bank into two cantons and render a geographically contiguous Palestinian state impossible—"which is the point," Gil says. Another part of the regional plan entails the government-sponsored construction of a densely populated urban settlement that would stretch along the now virtually uninhabited land between Jerusalem and Ma'ale Adumim. This would cut off East Jerusalem and effectively crush the possibility of East Jerusalem becoming the future capital of the Palestinian state. Along with the plan for the "bubble," this constitutes a direct attack on the "road map" peace plan, promulgated in 2003 by the United States, the European Union, the UN and Russia; the Geneva Accord; and the two-state solution itself. Sharon's Gaza disengagement plan, strong-armed through an unusually fractious Knesset in late March, is intended to insure Israel's security without really engaging in talks. By peeling off Gaza and all but annexing the large West Bank settlement blocs, Sharon believes, Israel's security will be guaranteed. But will it? And for how long?

"No matter what aspect of Israeli life you look at, you will always run into the occupation," Anat Hoffman says. She is a former Jerusalem city councilwoman and now the director of the Israel Religious Action Center, a civil rights group that advocates social justice and religious tolerance and opposes the imposition of religious goals and norms on civic life. "In part, the wall is about demographics," she says. The Jerusalem municipality's preferred demographic balance between Palestinians and Israelis in Jerusalem (the eternal and undivided capital of Israel) is 28 per-

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cent to 72 percent. But the actual figure is now 33 percent to 67 percent. If you have a blue Jerusalem identification card, which is issued by the Israeli government, it means you've been classified as a Palestinian Jerusalem resident (i.e., one of the lucky 33 percent). This card entitles you to pay taxes, to have municipal benefits (even though Palestinian garbage, say, is not picked up with great regularity) and to vote in municipal elections. But although a Palestinian may have a blue card, he or she is not a citizen, has no Israeli passport and cannot vote in national elections. In the old days, if a Palestinian woman with a blue Jerusalem card married a man from the West Bank, he would receive Jerusalem residence. But this is no longer the case. Jerusalemites can no longer bring in their spouses, even if there are children involved. Without the wall, the Palestinian population figure would be rising at a rate even more alarming to supporters of a Jewish Jerusalem, although one not entirely expected result of the wall's construction is that Palestinians whose homes are outside the planned wall are rushing to move inside before construction is completed, so they can remain in the city. Not surprisingly, along the inside of the wall, housing prices are rising steeply.

When she worked as a city councilwoman, Hoffman got into everything. One of the things she was interested in was earthquakes. You would think that Jerusalemites would have enough to worry about without considering the seismic dangers, but Hoffman, who went to UCLA and has learned about earthquakes, says this would be unrealistic. "Jerusalem is due for another major quake," she says. The last one was in 1927, and supposedly, big temblors occur here every eighty to a hundred years. According to Hoffman, Jerusalem could have as many as 100,000 fatalities in a large earthquake. "But I happen to know that there is no emergency plan in place to deal with the dead

and wounded, and I happen to know that we have only 20,000 shrouds, because I ordered them," Hoffman says.

Twenty thousand shrouds, waiting. It's a Jerusalemite interpretation of New York City's Central Park "Gates." It's the dark version of how a city welcomes its fate. The last shroud I paid attention to in Jerusalem was that of Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated in 1995 by a fanatical Israeli opponent of the Oslo Accords (not that one lacks for an opportunity to view shrouds, both ancient and contemporary, either in this city or in the occupied territories). But Rabin's shroud, after all the suits and the handshakes, was poignant—everything at the time seemed boiled down to the simple, the essential, the obvious, the plain white cloth of human necessity. Peace was threatened; peace would triumph; peace was logical and inevitable, no matter the obstacles placed in its path. Today that is patently not the case; Jerusalem itself seems to teeter at the edge of a self-imposed, self-destructive insanity.

A wall, for example, protects you—possibly, conceivably—from human bombs, but not from rockets. A wall gives you a breathing period, but before what grand catastrophe? A wall encourages rockets, as the Israelis have already seen in the north, near the Lebanese border, and in the south, near Gaza. Soon it will be Jerusalem's turn. The wall may prevent bloodshed, although the recent Tel Aviv suicide bombing calls that theory into question. But what a wall, a towering, blank, cement wall, signifies, in its dead heart, is that there is no more trust, that steps will be taken with no consultation, that compromise is a meaningless exercise and that the hope for peace, which Yoav has, and David Grossman has, and Hani has, and Abbas has, and Anat has, and I still have, is a hope now being pursued in the face of all evidence to the contrary. It is a desperate, necessary hope. ■

LETTERS

CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

fate that journalists have suffered in Iraq at the hands of the US military, but it didn't answer one question: Does the United States deliberately target journalists? On January 26, 2004, *Democracy Now!* featured an interview Scahill conducted with Gen. Wesley Clark, who was in charge of NATO forces that bombed Radio Television Serbia, killing sixteen journalists. Clark vigorously defends that bombing, although he tries to escape responsibility for the deaths by asserting that "Milosevic was warned." The deliberate targeting of Radio Television Serbia remains an undisputed fact. Although Clark talks about how it was a "command and control" center, at the time, various pronouncements by the US government made it quite clear that it was the alleged "propaganda" being dispensed—that is, its journalistic output—that qualified RTS as a "command and control" center, and nothing else.

It's also worth remembering that, although no one was killed in the attack, the US military deliberately bombed the Al Jazeera offices in Kabul during the assault on Afghanistan. A spokesman for the US Central Command said

the bombing was based on "compelling" evidence that the facility was being used by Al Qaeda, but needless to say, no compelling evidence, or any evidence at all, was ever released. Does the US military deliberately target journalists? Unquestionably yes. ELI STEPHENS

San Francisco

■ There's an interesting backstory to the news that former CNN executive Eason Jordan, chased from his job by right-wing bloggers for saying he believed journalists killed by coalition forces in Iraq had been targeted. During its 1999 war in Yugoslavia, NATO disliked the way the central Serb TV station in Belgrade was covering the fighting. Jordan, then head of CNN International, was informed that NATO planned to attack the station. He protested and the jets veered away during their first sortie. Jordan had time to clear out CNN's crew and equipment from the building. Two days later, on April 23, NATO struck, killing sixteen journalists and technicians. After the war ended, in October 1999, Jordan revealed the story of the premeditated attack at the "News World" media conference in Barcelona. JAY LYON

DEAN—LEAN & KEEN

Madison, Wisc.

■ With John Nichols, I applaud Howard Dean's ascendancy to greater influence in the Democratic Party ["Now He Has the Power," March 7]. If Dean is wise, he will counsel the Democrats to give leaders like Barbara Boxer—not just more white guys like himself—greater visibility and power. The Republicans have given minority spokespeople like Condoleezza Rice a lot of visibility, if not a lot of power, and it worries me that in the next public debate over affirmative action, we could witness the pathetic spectacle of a white male trying to defend this noble and needed remedy over the objections of a black female opponent.

ERIC PAUL JACOBSEN

TRANSLATIONS OF SCIASCIA

■ In her March 28 "Fear and Loathing in Italy," Frederika Randall states that only a few of Leonardo Sciascia's books have been translated into English. There are, in fact, English translations of at least nineteen of Sciascia's titles.

BOOKS & THE ARTS

All the World Is Green

MIKE WALLACE

EVERY MAN A SPECULATOR: A History of Wall Street in American Life.

By Steve Fraser.

HarperCollins. 721 pp. \$29.95.

"Social Security is the soft underbelly," says right-wing activist Stephen Moore. "If you can jab your spear through that, you can undermine the whole welfare state." But things aren't going well for the jabbers. Their claims of crisis have been proved false, their motivations meanly ideological (shredding the New Deal safety net) or merely mercenary (billions in profits for Wall Street). It's tempting to think they've overreached, as did Newt when he tried to shutter the government, and that with facts on our side, saving Social Security could be a slam-dunk.

Big mistake. This battle will not be settled by fact-laden presentations, any more than the last election was, because no matter how compelling such messages may seem, recipients filter them through a pre-existing mesh of views and values—accepting, adjusting, resisting or rejecting incoming exhortations, depending on how they comport with previously accumulated information and attitudes. Given that citizens are being asked to transfer custodianship of their future from the government to the financial marketplace, it's crucial to understand what people think and how they feel about Wall Street, to understand how it's seen in the culture at large, to know whether its stock has been rising or falling.

Which makes the arrival of Steve Fraser's book, an account of how Americans have perceived Wall Street over the past 200 years, incredibly timely. But timeli-

ness is not its only virtue. *Every Man a Speculator: A History of Wall Street in American Life* is fascinating in its own right. Though the title suggests a focus on financial affairs, it belongs on the shortlist of books that encompass and illuminate the entire trajectory of the American experience. That's because Fraser knows that Wall Street is far more than a workplace for bankers and brokers; rather, it is a place where Americans "have wrestled with ancestral attitudes and beliefs about work and play, about democracy and capitalism, about wealth, freedom and equality, about God and Mammon, about heroes and villains, about luck and sexuality, about national purpose and economic well-being."

Every Man's ambitious breadth is matched by investigative depth. In exploring Wall Street's cultural impact, Fraser has drawn on an astonishing array of sources—

From the very beginning, Wall Street has been both revered and reviled—a mirror of its dualistic and contradictory character.

potboiler novels and classics of American literature, biographies and memoirs, magazine pieces and poems, movies and plays, speeches and sermons, cartoons and board games, folk songs and Tin Pan Alley ditties, artworks and radio shows, legislative deliberations and judicial decisions, the work of academic economists and mass-movement pamphleteers. The range and abundance of material he has uncovered gives the book great authority—though also, in places, an overstuffed, repetitious and convoluted quality that slows the narrative flow: The manuscript would have benefited from one last pass through the editorial wringer. But the writing is so vivid, the sensibility so witty, the analysis so theoretically astute (yet utterly jargon free), that readers will shoot successfully through the occasional eddies and rapids.

So what can we glean from Fraser about the cultural resources available to contending parties in the Social Security debate?

Mike Wallace is co-author of *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (Oxford), author of *A New Deal for New York* (Bell and Weiland), Distinguished Professor at John Jay College (CUNY) and director of the Gotham Center for New York City History. He is working on *Gotham II*.

One of the most striking features of his survey is how starkly Manichean the responses to Wall Street have been over the centuries. From the very beginning—just after the Revolution, when, freed from Britain's imperial constraints, banking and stock trading emerged—Wall Street has been both revered and reviled. In part this mirrors its dualistic and contradictory character. It's been a site for assembling capital to fertilize productive enterprises. It's also been the place to speculate in ownership shares of such enterprises—speculation that has had beneficial but also deleterious and, at times, catastrophic consequences.

In the 1790s, wealthy merchants leapt to buy and trade public securities, to the delight of Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton, who, Fraser notes, "conceived of the Street as an engine of future national glory." Hamilton was sure these ur-speculators would invest their profits in long-term economic growth. Instead, in Wall Street's ur-burst of irrational exuberance, they chased after instant riches by plunging back into the market itself, led by Hamilton's close associate William Duer, the Darth Vader of early American finance. Drawing on insider information, Duer manipulated a bull market that sucked in unwary investors, then overreached and went belly up, precipitating the country's first stock market crash and first recession (a short one, given Wall Street's marginality to the existing agrarian economy).

Hamilton, dismayed by what he called "extravagant sallies of speculation," conceded that stock trading "fosters a spirit of gambling." But he resisted market regulation, fearing idle capital more than chaotic conditions and hoping that "public infamy" would draw the line between "dealers in the funds and mere unprincipled gamblers." Thomas Jefferson, appalled that (as he put it) "the credit and fate of the nation seem to hang on the desperate throws and plunges of gambling scoundrels," doubted such a line could be drawn. The antidemocratic implications of the links Hamilton was forging between financial elites and the federal government deeply troubled Jefferson, whose critique of monied aristocrats as threats to the Republic helped pave the way for his party's political triumph in 1800.

This initial debate, argues Fraser, foreshadowed the terms and tone of nineteenth-century combat over the steadily expanding role of financiers in the growing American economy, with Wall Street's

status rising and falling with the country's economic fortunes. During upswings, speculators gained kudos for mobilizing investment in canals, railroads and industrialization: Their willingness to place bets on the future made them emblems of America's buoyant optimism and entrepreneurial audacity. And while few Americans as yet actually participated in the financial marketplace, the fortunes won there by clashing cliques of bulls and bears stimulated avaricious fantasies among a far wider circle. The fact that men of plebeian background could get rich by speculative wheeling and dealing also gave the Street a democratic sheen in a democratic era.

Wall Street titans were also credited with warriorlike virtues, even sexual prowess. Fraser is particularly sharp in spotting the emerging association of financiers, from at least the days of August Belmont

In the Gilded Age, speculators were widely identified with rebellion against the buttoned-down standards of bourgeois masculinity.

and Commodore Vanderbilt, with rebellion against the buttoned-down standards of bourgeois masculinity. Freebooting speculators like Daniel Drew and Jim Fisk had bravado and dash—"I was born to be bad," Fisk boasted—and their defiance of conventional proprieties gave them a raffish glamour. Ordinary folks relished reading dime-novel accounts of their swashbuckling exploits, drinking their health while belting out barroom favorites like "Jim Fisk, or He Never Went Back on the Poor" and poring over inspirational accounts like James D. McCabe's *Great Fortunes and How They Were Made* (1870).

But even in flush times, when Wall Street exerted a mass fascination, it also inspired mass revulsion. Pious Protestants considered speculation a form of gambling and thus a sin, not least in dangling delusions of effortless gain before the improvident. "Wall Street is a thousand times deadlier than Monte Carlo," hissed a character in the 1887 Broadway play *The Henrietta*. At best, its rewards were ill gotten, leached off the enterprise of others, not earned the old-fashioned way, through pluck, perseverance and productive labor. At worst, it seemed to be a species of con game—a conviction bolstered by the steadily rising number of frauds, defalcations and market manipulations. The Street's "code of laws," the *Louisville Courier* editorialized in 1857,

was that of "the sharper, the imposter, the cheat, and the swindler," a view echoed in Herman Melville's mordant *Confidence-Man*. From this perspective, speculators were not lovable rogues but menacing outlaws. Jay Gould—whose failed effort to corner the nation's gold market in 1869 precipitated a crisis that shuttered hundreds of businesses and cost thousands of workers their jobs—suffered universal execration. Gould, said Gustavus Myers in his *History of the Great American Fortunes*, was a "pitiless human carnivore, glutting on the blood of his numberless victims...an incarnate fiend"; Hamilton couldn't have wished for a greater degree of "public infamy," but it did nothing to rein in speculation.

Worst of all was the ever more evident link between Wall Street's investment mechanisms and cyclical derangements like the panics of 1837, 1857, 1873 and 1893, each of which ushered in depressions and increasingly violent capital-labor conflicts. Among those most alienated by a competitive capitalism run amok were key figures on Wall Street itself. Investment bankers like J.P. Morgan took a longer-term, more systemic view of the national economy. They loathed speculators (whom they considered sociopathic gamblers) and the wild "free market" whose gyrations they engendered. From the 1870s on, Morgan and his colleagues struggled to limit self-destructive competition, and by century's end they had engineered the massive consolidations that ushered in corporate capitalism, establishing a privately owned command economy run largely by financiers like themselves.

For Fraser the heyday of finance capitalism that followed—he calls it the Age of Morgan and dates it, reasonably enough, from 1890 to 1920—marks both a distinct phase in the development of US capitalism and a cultural breakthrough for Wall Street, the moment when it attained middle-class respectability. Many Americans, he finds, especially in the burgeoning ranks of well-paid professionals and managers, accepted Wall Street's hegemony for much the same reason they voted for McKinley Republicans: as a bulwark against the mob and economic crises. Bankers and entrepreneurial grandees were lionized as financial and industrial Napoleons in popular fiction and middle-class magazines. Speculators were rehabilitated as well—no longer mere gamblers, they were anointed as

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professionals in their own right, practitioners of the "science" of speculation, members of the "securities industry," which irrigated industrial growth and opened speculative opportunities for the upper middle class. Academic economists offered guilt-free defenses of stock and commodities exchanges (and derided critics as ignorant rustics), while pragmatist philosophers like William James and Charles Sanders Peirce re-evaluated (as Fraser astutely observes) the very notion of chance, making it seem, like market risk, "both inescapable and controllable."

Yet the new Wall Street met with considerable opposition, too. Some critiques were rooted in the older economic and cultural order, like those of the genteel, old-moned intelligentsia (Henry Adams, Henry James, Edith Wharton), who deplored the financial oligarchy for its vulgarity and avarice. In *The House of Mirth*, as Fraser observes, Wharton provided a withering portrait of "the lethal moral and social psychology that lay concealed beneath the frivolity and mercenary pre-occupations of the Wall Street world"; James, for his part, expressed acute discomfort in *The American Scene* with the Street's "pushing male crowd."

Prairie farmer populists also had one foot in the vanishing moral economy. True, they straightforwardly castigated Eastern bankers and bondholders as regional exploiters, a charge neatly captured by an earthy sketch (in the bestselling tract *Coin's Financial School*) of a continentally scaled cow feeding in the West while getting milked in New York. But "Morga-nization," Fraser makes clear, threatened a way of life, not just a source of income, and it stirred ancient cultural anxieties. Populists produced ferocious denunciations of the "Money Kings of Wall Street" that depicted them as fiendish conspirators and sybaritic plutocrats out to overturn the moral foundations of the Republic, rhetoric that occasionally curdled into anti-Semitic rant. But their resistance was

forward-looking as well as retrograde, Fraser insists, noting that their "ultimate goal was to wrest control of the monetary system from the Wall Street elite and vest it in the hands of the U.S. Treasury."

Other opponents (small businessmen, urban workers, many professionals) were more thoroughly enmeshed in modern industrial life; they accepted the new corporate order but rejected the financial elite's overlordship as pernicious and irrational. These Progressives devoured the writings of muckrakers—critics who deflated the puffery surrounding the heroes of finance and industry, but did so in a pragmatic, empirical and secular fashion. Assaults on "predatory wealth" accelerated after the Panic of 1907. Exposed by investigative journalists (Charles Edward Russell's *Lawless Wealth*), jurists (Louis Brandeis's *Other People's Money*) and renegade speculators (Thomas Lawson's *Frenzied Finance*) demonstrated that Wall Streeters traded on inside information, produced their own speculative booms and crises, blocked fruitful competition, suffocated innovation, made obscene amounts of money and used it to corrupt politicians and the press. These critiques, as Fraser shows, flowed out into ever wider channels of popular culture, from the Broadway musical (one play featured a chorus of demons chanting, "This seat's reserved for Morgan/That great financial Gorgon") to the newly arrived motion picture (in D.W. Griffith's 1909 film *A Corner in Wheat*, a wheat king is literally buried alive by his ill-gotten gains).

Once again, cultural subversion facilitated political initiatives. In the Progressive era many of Wall Street's opponents rallied around Theodore Roosevelt. As the scion of an ancient-moned clan, Roosevelt possessed both a "highly developed sense of social obligation" and a contempt for financial plutocrats that "was bred in the bone, part of an upbringing that dismissed materialistic strivings as unworthy, debilitating, and effeminate." Woodrow Wilson and Eugene Debs—TR opponents in the election of 1912—had different vantage points, different social backing and different approaches to curbing the "Money Trust." But the overall popular mood had clearly turned against Wall Street and modest reforms ensued, including the Federal Reserve Act (1913), though the arrival of World War I, which Wall Street played a crucial role in underwriting, short-circuited the Progressive crusade.

The ensuing 1920s–30s boom-bust cycle followed the well-established sine curve trajectory, but the oscillations were far more extreme, producing what Fraser calls Wall Street's first "season in utopia," which led to the most serious challenge yet to private control of the nation's capital markets.

The 1920s surfed in on a wave of commodities, and Wall Street regained its luster by channeling capital to frontier technologies like radio and movies, airplanes and autos. The stock market again shook off its moral stigma, its Dionysian aspects resurfaced and speculating on margin became as sexy as wearing short skirts and drinking bathtub gin. Indeed, "playing" the market, Fraser suggests, became part of a more epochal development—the shouldering aside of the Puritan work-and-thrift moral economy by a shiny new culture of consumption. Constraints on corruption eased, too: Rogues were back in vogue, and stock pools—conspiracies by insider wolves to shear outsider lambs—were reported like sporting events.

With the Dow on a roll, a broader (yet still narrow) swath of the population rushed to get in on the action—heightening the aura of democratization—but the biggest profits still rose to the top, where they triggered another round of profligate consumption. Mellon Republicans green-flagged the process—approving mergers, slashing taxes on the rich—while pocketing initial stock offerings before they went public, burnishing crony capitalism to glossy perfection. Yet seldom was heard a discouraging word. Religious critics lacked fervor and moral authority, while surviving Populist and Progressive skeptics were dismissed as killjoys or cranks. Even Henry Ford's anti-Semitic ravings about Wall Street's sinister influence on the country's moral fiber failed to gain traction. Wall Street oracles smugly announced the arrival of a "new era," the end of history.

The Crash punctured this fantasy. The Street's most august figures were exposed as cheats and felons—pillars of rectitude like New York Stock Exchange president Richard Whitney went off to Sing Sing wearing his bowler hat. Wall Street was reimagined as a bestiary of parasites, gamblers and noxious con men—a return of the repressed popular iconography of shame. Many, like F. Scott Fitzgerald, reconsidered the 1920s as one long drunk in which stocks had functioned like booze (as Fraser summarizes *Babylon Revisited*, Fitzgerald's post-mortem) "lubricating childish daydreams about an eternity of good times, anesthetizing any sense of

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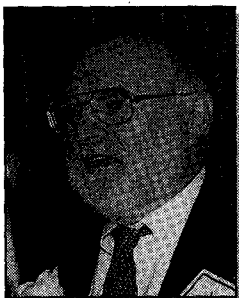
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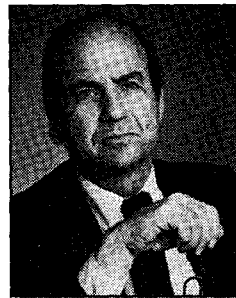
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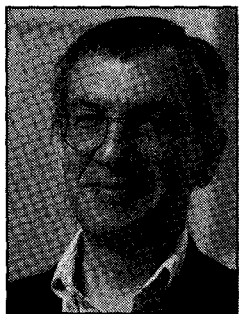
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responsibility, fostering a careless and criminal negligence." Meanwhile, theoreticians like John Maynard Keynes were deriding the purported "science" of stockbrokerage as a regime in which "enterprise becomes the bubble on a whirlpool of speculation." Worst of all, Wall Street was widely ridiculed. "Laughter is a punishing historical sentence," Fraser observes, and the flood of lampooning cartoons, literary satires and iconoclastic biographies "whittled away the puissance of the old ruling class."

This latest round of cultural subversion fatally compromised Wall Street's ability to hold its own against New Deal reformers. FDR—who, like TR, inherited a patrician disdain for the nouveaux riches—declared that "we cannot allow our economic life to be controlled by that small group of men whose chief outlook upon the social welfare is tintured by the fact that they can make huge profits from the lending of money and the marketing of securities." The financial world was "subjected to a real if flawed public supervision under the New Deal"; social democratic programs like Social Security were set in place; and state-capitalist investment mechanisms loosened Wall Street's chokehold on capital formation—even when it came to financing World War II, the Street remained a junior partner to government.

Fraser is very good on the New Deal era—not surprisingly, as he's given us a superb biography of Sidney Hillman and co-edited an essential collection about the period—but he's particularly smart about the 1940s–60s boom, the first in which Wall Street failed to instantly overcome Depression-era obloquy. The 1930s had been too searing to be soon forgotten: Postwar America remained security-conscious, and flamboyant speculators stayed in the doghouse. Once again a gray-flannel Wall Street presented itself as the prudential guardian of widows and orphans, and as a patriotic bulwark against un-Americanism (broker Charles Merrill argued that nothing "would provide a stronger defense against the threat of Communism, than the wide ownership of stocks in the country"). Unfortunately, the little investors remained gun-shy, and the new institutional purchasers like pension funds and insurance companies bought only the bluest of blue-chip stocks. Worse, the great corporations now financed expansion and innovation largely out of internal capital. The result, Fraser argues, was that Wall Street, having been for a century "an essential element of the country's cultural iconography," now "vanished from the

front page and lived out its life in the business section of the daily newspaper." Financiers, to be sure, became commanding figures in the economic and defense establishment. But Wall Street itself, "once a main thoroughfare running through the American imagination, now seemed deserted." Some swagger resurfaced in the go-go 1960s, only to vanish in the crash of 1970, which ushered in a decadelong period of stagflation and decline that Keynesian remedies failed to reverse.

The convergence of economic crisis with military defeat in Vietnam, Fraser suggests, left the Wall Street establishment open to another onslaught, this time from the right. In the 1980s, a rising generation of speculators like Ivan Boesky and Carl Icahn, more plebeian and outer-borough than the white-shoe old guard, stormed the twin fortresses of the *ancien régime* wielding "a capitalist version of liberationist theology." Wall Street warriors and Reagan Republicans repudiated big government and launched a counter-revolution against the New Deal. They also lit into the "Corpocracy" of complacent industrial managers, claiming that corporate takeovers and makeovers would revive the economy and succor disenfranchised shareholders.

Supply-side zealots, mergers and acquisitions wizards, greenmailers and assorted asset strippers, Fraser points out, failed to accomplish their professed goals—hostile mergers impaired efficiency, 1980s investment in plants and equipment sank below 1970s levels and S&L bailouts wasted billions—but they did manage to reignite the speculative sector. A torrent of capital surged into paper entrepreneurship—an endless reshuffling of nominal assets—and Wall Street went from being the economy's spark plug to being its engine, a structural shift (from finance capitalism to financialized capitalism) akin to the revolution wrought during the Age of Morgan.

The 1980s also revived—and deepened—the country's infatuation with Wall Street. With Americans hungry for signs that the days of defeat and decline were over, strident macho posturing by bond traders in suspenders seemed a Viagrasque antidote for a "wilted national masculinity." Corporate raiders, greenmailers and "hot-to-trade portfolio managers with ice in their veins" made out like financial samurai, sporting copies of *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu in an atmosphere, Fraser notes, that "reeked of pure male fantasy." Scorning what guru "Adam Smith" (a.k.a. George Goodman) had derided in *The Money Game* as, in Fraser's words, the "stultifying em-

phasis on safety and security that had settled over the markets since the war," they chased after the biggest and quickest payoffs. Shareholders were happy—and their numbers exploded—as junk-bond financing generated handsome returns for those in mutual funds, pension funds and investment clubs (there were 7,000 of the latter by the end of the 1980s). And Wall Street resurfaced, big-time, in popular culture. Magazines like *Success*, *Millionaire* and *Vanity Fair* published lavish accounts of the "New Tycoonery"; soap operas (*Dynasty*, *Dallas*) doted on the doings of the nouveaux riches; and a multitude of media retailed each Gilded Age excess from masquerade balls to kitsch Hamptons palaces.

The 1987 crash momentarily soured the national mood, as did revelations (*Liar's Poker*, *Den of Thieves*, *The Predators' Ball*, *Barbarians at the Gate*) of gross corruption on the part of radical outsiders turned privileged insiders. Mike Milken and Ivan Boesky were sent to the slammer, and there was a brief reckoning with the social costs of the latest Great Barbecue—zooming homelessness, industrial collapse, declining wages, growing inequality. In popular culture, the trader went from being a Master of the Universe to being a villain, best exemplified by Gordon Gekko, the pitiless

parasite played by Michael Douglas in Oliver Stone's film *Wall Street* ("I create nothing. I own," Gekko gloats). But much of the criticism, Fraser argues, was more ironic than indignant, as if any hope for serious reform had been abandoned. There was no stopping the free-market utopians' cultural momentum, in part because the crisis was quickly contained and the paper boom roared on.

For Fraser, the 1990s were the moment when a decisive cultural counterrevolution was wrought. At the decade's beginning, Wall Street's reputation rebounded, thanks to its financing of Internet innovation. Toward its end, as dot-com development reached its reality-based limits, capital sluiced instead into faith-based speculation. Ongoing casinoization was spurred by Republicans and Clintonian Democrats alike, the latter having shed their New Deal social conscience and converted to free-market orthodoxy. Together they cut capital gains taxes, deregulated the financial sector and turned a blind eye to the growth of gigantic speculative vehicles (the misnamed "hedge" funds), freed from government supervision but ready to accept government rescue.

Middle- and upper-class Americans

piled into the market, assured that "risk-controlling" techniques—courtesy of university departments of "financial engineering"—had all but eliminated the downside. For the first time, roughly half the population participated, passively or actively: By 1998 there were 3,513 mutual funds. Wall Street seized hold of the popular imagination. TV viewers glued themselves to CNN-FN, Bloomberg and CNBC, captivated by financial analysts, business talk shows and real-time tickers scrolling (from 1996 on) across the bottom of their screens. At bookstores, parents snatched up best-sellers like *Dow 36,000* and *The Roaring 2000s: Building the Wealth and Lifestyle You Desire in the Greatest Boom in History*, and took home *Wow the Dow* for the kiddies—who as likely as not were playing *The Stock Market Game* in grade school, or joining high school investment teams and competing in tournaments.

Media pundits and think tanks hailed this popular participation as a breakthrough for democracy—a triumphalism, as Fraser shrewdly notes, that mirrored American exaltation at winning the cold war. We were now the "Shareholder Nation," with the financial marketplace replacing the town meeting as the place where citizens were freest to determine their fate. The

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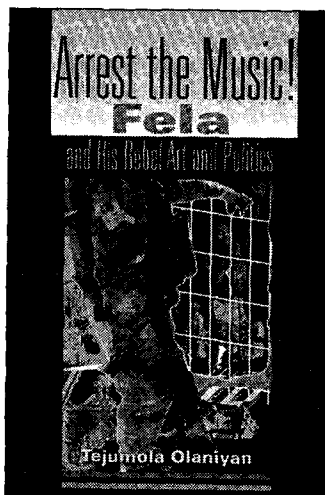
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1990s were also the moment, Fraser believes, when the merger between Wall Street and the wider consumer culture that began in the 1920s was finally consummated. Not only had the capital casino become a 24/7 playground in its own right, but the willingness (or need) of average people to spend tomorrow's anticipated capital gains today sustained purchasing in other sectors of the economy. Ordinary Americans did make money in the 1990s, though with the boom at white heat, 86 percent of the gains accrued to the top 10 percent. And the top 1 percent, which had 19.9 percent of the country's wealth going into the decade, had 40 percent of it coming out. Another round of gilded arrogance and rococo extravagance ensued, but this time there were virtually no complaints about "barbarians" or "vanities": "The '90s," Maureen Dowd noted, "are the '80s without the moral disgust."

In 2000 the bubble burst, with big losses all around. Stunning frauds were revealed that implicated virtually the entire Wall Street establishment. Corporate directors had cooked books (with help from banks and accounting firms), propped up share prices to cash in on stock options and looted pension funds on their way out the door. But this time, there was no backlash. The political fallout was minimal, the legislative response toothless.

Fraser takes this lack of reaction as evidence that a Rubicon has been crossed. The popular culture that for two centuries cast a cold or at least an ambivalent eye on Wall Street has now assumed a "stance of fateful inevitability about the reign of the free market." The national imagination that "once peopled the Street with usurers, monopolists, con men, aristocrats, and sinners" is now "a dimming memory." This waning of cultural antipathy has in turn sapped political energy; the wellsprings of outrage seem to have dried up, along with "the instinct to collectively resist the usurpations of presumptuous wealth." Wall Street, "for the moment at least," seems to have "won the war for hearts and minds."

The only thing that might conceivably reverse this triumph, Fraser thinks, would be another truly systemic crisis. But

given the far greater centrality of today's financial sector, and the intricate interconnectedness of the international economy, a financial earthquake higher up on the Richter scale than that of 2000 might well trigger a global economic tsunami of horrendous proportions—which could, as Fraser is well aware, have horrific political consequences. *Every Man* thus ends on a dark and spirited note.

I think this is too pessimistic. Let's set aside the question of the degree to which 9/11 absorbed and deflected the popular outrage that might otherwise have burst over the heads of Enronizers and privateers, turning princes back into frogs. And let's assume Fraser is right in attributing current complacency to the fact that the cultural underpinnings of resistance have been eroded, the moral goalposts moved down the field. Still, it's worth considering the possibility that the *political* attack on Social Security might prove the functional equivalent of an *economic* collapse and provide the shock needed to delegitimize reigning elites and revitalize popular opposition. It's better than an equivalent, in fact, because we confront not a sudden catastrophe that might encourage a panicky acceptance of authority but an Iraq-style voluntary war that affords us time to mobilize resistance in the court of public opinion.

In doing so, *Every Man a Speculator* can be a valuable resource. Fraser's renaissance of Americans' longstanding reservations about Wall Street has mapped the location of ancient stress points that are worth re-examining for signs of contemporary strain; and his assessment of previously proffered reforms can help distinguish outmoded critiques, inextricably tied to vanished moral economies, from proposals of continuing salience, if updated and refashioned.

Thus, it would clearly be witless to denounce speculation as gambling, and gambling as a sin. But I suspect that a culture chockablock with chapters of Gamblers Anonymous remains hip to the kinship between Wall Street-style irrational exuberance and Vegas-style bingeing, hence cautious about transferring nest eggs to casinos. On the corruption front, while cynicism about the possibility of checking financial fraud is understandably rampant, I'd bet that even those prepared to roll the dice with their retirement funds would prefer not to play in a rigged game, and might well back calls to quintuple the SEC's budget and put a pit bull like Eliot Spitzer in charge of the croupiers.

Similarly, while the social gospel is clearly in remission, surely the vast num-

bers of church people now running the nation's innumerable soup kitchens include many who find ethically despicable the zestful spear jabbers' lack of concern for those who would face an impoverished old age, should smiley-faced market projections prove as wrong as they have repeatedly in the past. Such community-minded activists have also probably spotted "ownership society" flummery for what it is: the latest version of "It's *your* money" self-centeredness, an irresponsible repudiation of social solidarity.

The nineteenth century's Victorian family code is definitely passé, but Fraser's intriguing identification of a centuries-long link between hypermasculinity and speculative excess should alert us both to the possible appeal of such macho posturing to some younger male voters, and its likely alienating effect on less testosterone-driven constituencies. (How's "Would you trust your rainy-day fund to Gordon Gekko?" as a slogan?) Moreover, there must be many Americans who see the privatizers' ugly effort to divide children from parents for what it is—a menace to contemporary family values. Most people know full well that Social Security has not only been a lifesaver for the old but has provided a measure of independence to the young, shifting some of the burden of caring for aged parents to the country's broad collective shoulders.

Fraser's recounting of how often euphoric complacency has given way to rude awakening might well resonate with those who lived through the 1990s boom and meltdown. People who personally experienced ulcer-making anxieties about the future as they watched their 401(k)s sag—and who agree the record suggests such lurches will likely recur—might be ready to oppose efforts to end psychic security as we've known it and pitch us into a Pepsid 'R' Us society.

Add these up and you've got a fair number of purchase points for moral resistance to self-serving ideologues like Stephen "Jabber" Moore, who would return us to a tooth-and-claw world. But Fraser offers far more than assistance on the Social Security front. His sweeping historical reconstruction is a powerful reminder that our current economic arrangements are the product of centuries of debate and struggle, not the inevitable legacy of invisible "market forces." In historicizing (and thus demystifying) the present, *Every Man* joins the long list of acts of cultural subversion, and invitations to political action, so admirably chronicled in its pages. ■



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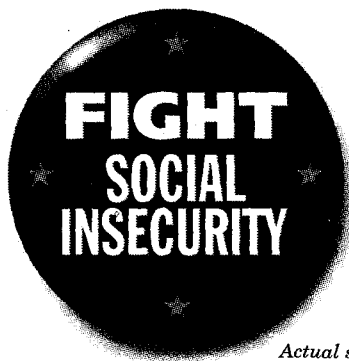
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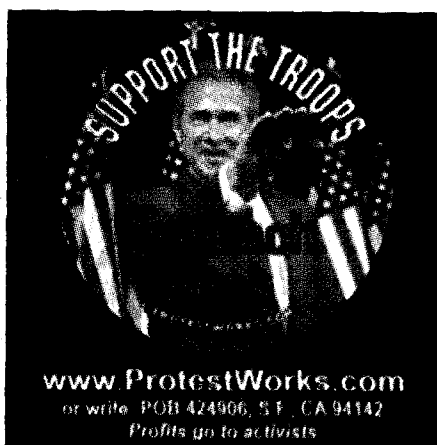


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Gangs of Shanghai

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KUNG FU HUSTLE • LOOK AT ME

The scene is Shanghai, or Busby Berkeley's dream of it: a Chinese city of the 1930s, teeming on the outskirts with rickety tenement compounds, bustling in its business district with clanging streetcars and plump, humpbacked autos, groaning everywhere under the oppression of the Axe Gang, a chorus of

criminals who dance like Fred Astaire and dress like London bankers, except for the hatchets on their belts. As the gangsters jitter and jive in their Art Deco casino—while a docile police chief thumbs through his cash—a montage of well-choreographed mayhem convulses the city. I mean woman-shotgunned-in-the-face, blasted-backward-through-the-air-type mayhem.

"People live in peace," a title explains, "only in the poorest districts, which have nothing to interest the Axe Gang." The camera glides, with 1930s facility, into Pig Sty Alley: four teetering stories of low-ceilinged shops and cramped residences, gathered like a broken-sided box around a courtyard damp with laundry.

Here, a different oppression reigns. The landlord, a would-be lounge lizard, slinks about putting the touch on his tenants, for money if they're men, for the sake of the touch if they're not. Meanwhile his robust wife, her hair permanently rolled up in curlers and a cigarette forever dangling from her lip, reasserts discipline when needed by hurling the landlord out of a second-story window, followed by a skull-denting flowerpot.

Only a loser of the lowest sort would be so stupid as to seek his fortune in Pig Sty Alley. Enter Sing (Stephen Chow): a scrawny fast-talker dressed in clothes assembled from other people's wash lines. He struts into the courtyard pretending to be an Axe Gang member and soon enough, by bluff and swagger, calls down the vengeance of the real gang on Pig Sty Alley. It's Sing's first self-inflicted disaster in *Kung Fu Hustle*.

Thinking of the many more to come—the punctured boasts, the ballooning body parts, the calamities that spark one another like a chain of firecrackers—the synopsis falls silent. To tell more of the story of *Kung Fu Hustle* is to risk telling all, from the Zither of Doom to the flaming

Buddhist Palm, from the flying attack in Toad Style to the explosive Lion's Roar, not excepting the tale of the mute girl with the broken lollipop and the heartache of her failed defender, a poor boy pledged to "uphold world peace and fight evil" with instructions from a fifty-cent pamphlet. A mere recital of the plot points would make an entertainment for a winter's night; but since it's spring as I write, let's simply say that *Kung Fu Hustle* gives you something to watch, as today's American pop movies seldom do.

Serving not only as star of the film but as its director, producer and co-writer, the immensely popular Chow (*Shaolin Soccer*) shot *Kung Fu Hustle* on elaborately beautiful sets constructed in and around Shanghai, with a technical crew drawn from the best of Hong Kong's film industry. The cinematographer was the veteran Poon Hang Sang (*Peking Opera Blues*; *A Chinese Ghost Story*), any one of whose crane shots or dolly excursions would be the glory of a Scorsese picture. The production designer was Oliver Wong—a frequent collaborator with Jackie Chan—and the sound engineer was Leung Chi Tat, who has amassed a decade's worth of credits with Wong Kar-Wai. This accumulation of expertise became even more extravagant with the action choreography, for which Chow called on not one but two masters, Yuen Wo Ping (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*; *Kill Bill*) and Sammo Hung (*A Touch of Zen*; *Wheels on Meals*).

As this lavish display of pan-Chinese talent unfolds, you get the impression that you're watching a showcase production, like one of those old MGM revues featuring two dozen of the studio's biggest stars—the difference being that Chow has nothing to promote, other than his joy at commanding such riches. He conducts himself in *Kung Fu Hustle* less like a box-office champion than a fan who is especially rapt with admiration for the different generations of

performers he has brought together. Deep students of Asian trash cinema will have the pleasure of recognizing them all. More ignorant viewers (including me) will fail to spot them, and so will have the different but equal pleasure of being surprised when a character's disguise falls away to reveal his or her astonishing powers.

I have been told that this theme of disguise goes far back in Chinese culture. For centuries, kung fu masters have figured in folklore and literature as hidden defenders of the poor, often wandering alone, in humble circumstances, to fight against the arrogance of power and the corruptions of officialdom. We recently saw an autumnal version of this myth in Zhang Yimou's *House of Flying Daggers*. Chow, by contrast, looks at kung fu legend with a child's eyes. He believes in the ideals (in a sapheaded, sentimental way) and at the same time sees them as material for a Looney Tune: legs that spin like the Road Runner's, torsos that splat like Wile E. Coyote's. Until close to the end, the comic mood predominates. Then Chow drops his own shabby disguise to emerge as a shining hero, and the sky opens for him, the evil fall prostrate (or are jammed head-first into the roof beams), the poor are vindicated and time runs backward, so that innocence may at last be recaptured. Somehow, this climax comes off as sincere—enormously silly, of course, but heartfelt—with Chow himself emerging less as a saint than as a guy who has finally gotten cleaned up and learned the value of hard work.

An unstable yet miraculously coherent mixture of stylized fighting, grotesque comedy, romantic wish fulfillment, deluxe production values and rhetorical appeals to working-class solidarity, *Kung Fu Hustle* may not be the most profound movie you'll see this year but is certainly the only one of its kind. It takes its peculiar place in a now venerable line of Asian films that have reminded us of the simple, kinetic joys that American movies have lost. And although you might suspect Chow of being a little too fond of cinematic artifice, I'm glad to say there's not a whiff of homage when he takes a line here from *Spider-Man*, a line there from *The Matrix* and a whole special-effects sequence from *The Shining*. Chow is working in a tradition that is fully alive, so these are out-and-out thefts.

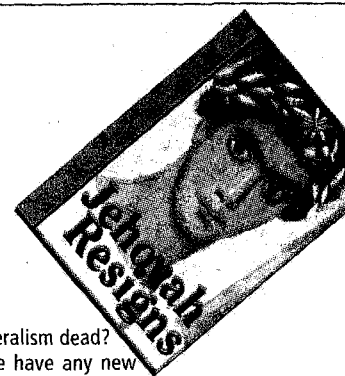
If you insist on watching something serious, though, I draw your attention to *Look at Me (Comme une image)*, a satirical drama from France about careerism, classical music and the tyranny of the size-six dress.

Directed by Agnès Jaoui from a script she wrote with her longtime collaborator, Jean-Pierre Bacri, *Look at Me* focuses on women in two troubled, interlocking families. Lolita (Marilou Berry) is the short, plump, adult daughter of Etienne (Bacri), a famous author and publisher whose temper is symbolized by the blood-red shirts he likes to wear. Now married to his second wife, a picture-perfect blonde who is no older than Lolita, Etienne takes notice of his daughter only for the sake of the intermittent put-down, addressed with casual brutality to her face, her weight, her clothes and her aspirations for a career as a singer.

Sylvia (Jaoui) is Lolita's vocal coach, and she, too, dismisses the young woman, until she discovers her connection to the much-admired and powerful Etienne. Then, suddenly, Sylvia becomes friendly and helpful—because she wants to penetrate Etienne's circle and also because her husband, Pierre (Laurent Grévill), a struggling novelist, will benefit from the association. Soon, Sylvia and Pierre are off for a weekend at Etienne's country house, where the mixture of types and classes brings to mind the films of Renoir, in ways that are not always flattering to Jaoui.

As a writer and director, she must struggle with a terrible burden: her own acting. One of the worst muggers to hit the screen since Red Skelton, Jaoui not only reduces her characterizations to a sequence of masklike contortions but often performs these facial posturings on cue, without bothering to listen to the other actor's line. In the past she has rescued herself, principally by her association with Bacri (who is incapable of a false gesture), but now she adds to this borrowed strength the growing nuance of her writing and direction. The evidence is her creation, with Berry, of Lolita: a young woman whose unpleasantness derives partly from her reaction to her father's outrages and partly from emulation of them. She, too, can turn into an angry, self-absorbed bully. She's just not as good at it as Etienne—and she also has a streak of kindness and hopefulness that redeems her for the audience.

The first time I saw *Look at Me*, at the opening of the 2004 New York Film Festival, I thought it was a craftsmanlike entertainment, made to open our eyes to social dynamics that are already in full view. A recent second viewing convinced me that there's much more. This is an expansive film, and a humane one, which only gradually discloses its depth and ambition. If you concentrate on Jaoui's



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■ John Edwards, 2004 Vice Presidential Candidate and Former US Senator for North Carolina will deliver the keynote address at "Fairness: Its Role in Our Lives," a public conference on April 14-15, 2005. Equality, justice and social change all have their roots in fairness. Seeking to understand what drives these perceptions, this conference will examine issues of fairness in current events and throughout history. Visit www.socres.org/fairness or call (212) 229-2488. Tickets are \$35 or \$12 per session.

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■ Sex, Seniors & the HIV Crisis: Wednesday, April 20, 7:00 p.m. Jane Fowler, 69-year-old HIV-positive grandmother/retired journalist, and Susan Forlenza, MD, NYC Health Dept. epidemiologist, speak on personal and public health issues for sex after 50. Free event. New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 West 64th Street @ Central Park West, Caring Committee of the New York Society for Ethical Culture Manhattan. Info: Gray Panthers, (212) 799-7572. www.geocities.com/GrayPanthersNY.

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■ "The hidden winner of [the 2004] election may well have been the Working Families Party, which established itself as an emerging political force statewide..." —*New York Times*. Join us at our 2005 WFP Spring Thing with former Senator John Edwards on April 14. Visit www.workingfamiliesparty.org or call (718) 222-3796 for more information.

The advertising deadline for Events is every Thursday. Rates: \$190 for 50 words; \$225 for 75 words, additional words (above 75) \$2.00 each. To place an ad, call Leigh at (212) 209-5414.

voice, rather than her face, you may even discover that it's warm.

Screening schedule: Through April 12, the Pioneer Theater on Manhattan's Lower East Side is presenting "Homeland Insecurity," a series of recent documentaries made with the support of the New Israeli Foundation for Cinema and Television. Though no longer exactly "new" (it has been operating since 1993), this quasi-governmental foundation remains almost scandalously independent, helping to produce pictures of Israeli society that are of no use to either the Ministry of Tourism or the UJA-Federation fundraisers. Most of the works in the series are currently unknown to me, but experience persuades me that they'll be an uneven lot: personal, gritty, humorous, angry, sometimes amateurish, sometimes devastating. Take a risk. For information: (212) 591-0434, or www.twoboots.com/pioneer/monthly_programs/2005-04.htm.

Looking instead for the Big Picture? Visit the Museum of Modern Art for its midcareer retrospective of writer, actor, director, singer-songwriter and sort-of-documentarian Christopher Guest. On view April 8 to 17, the series includes all the films (from *This Is Spinal Tap* through *A Mighty Wind*), as well as television work dating back to the 1970s. Bluff, bully or buy your way into the museum on April 9, and you can hear Guest perform a live acoustic set with regular co-conspirators Michael McKean and Harry Shearer, then engage in a discussion (unscripted, of course) with Parker Posey and Bob Balaban. For information: (212) 708-9400, or www.moma.org.

As for you *Nation* readers in Atlanta, Chicago, Austin and Los Angeles who are tired of the New York bias of this column: Hop on a plane for Berkeley, California, where the Pacific Film Archive is presenting a mini-retrospective of the documentaries of Marina Goldovskaya, from April 7 to 17. Titled *A Woman With a Movie Camera*, the series focuses on her extraordinary work from the *perestroika* period and beyond, including her epoch-making investigation into the history of the gulag, the 1988 *Solovky Power*. Goldovskaya will be an artist-in-residence at the PFA during the series and will present a lecture on April 14, in conjunction with the screening of her 1992 film *The Shattered Mirror: A Diary of a Turbulent Time*. For information: (510) 642-0808, or www.bampfa.berkeley.edu. ■

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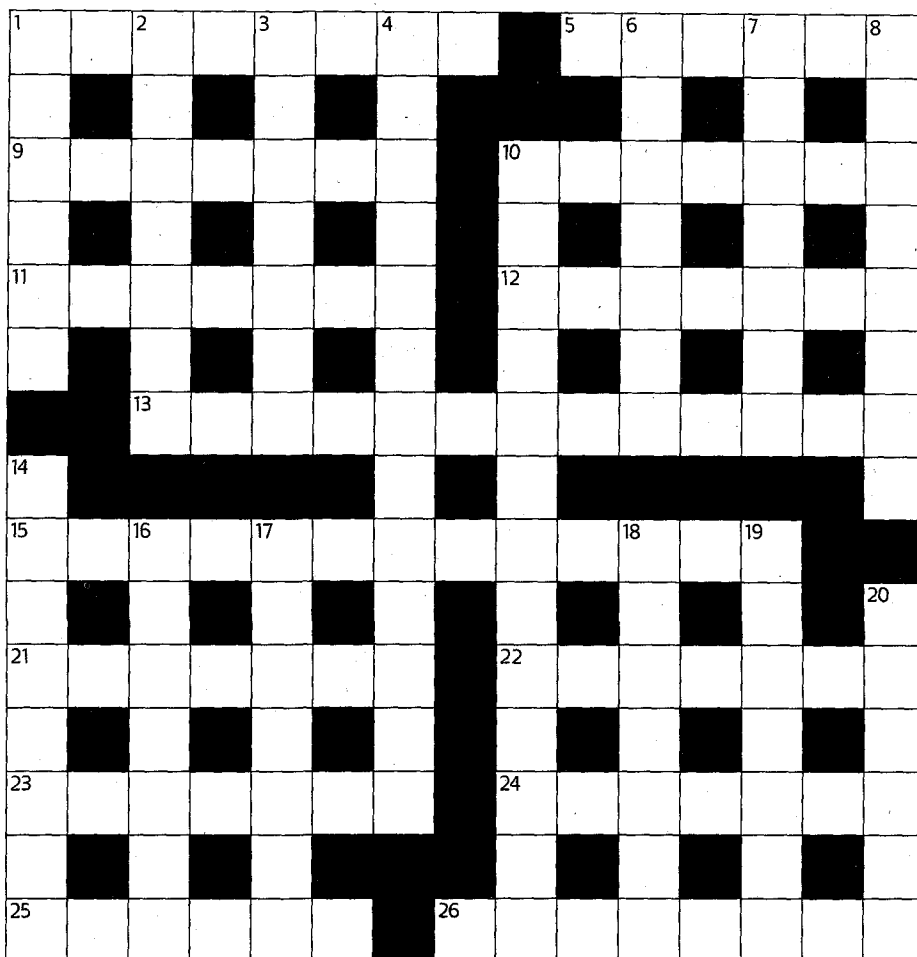
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ACROSS

- 1 The setting of it is possibly by one who wants to create a scene of terror. (4,4)
- 5 Duck when you write down the answer! (6)
- 9 Supposedly cut by one capable only of 10 in the best manner—and with relish. (7)
- 10 In force for some time. (7)
- 11 Not a sum that's unusual, but quantities of it. (7)
- 12 The Spanish and Roman number in the field have the people handing out 14, showing what they thought prolonged life. (7)
- 13 Reacting to an unpleasant suggestion by the seizure of the property divider? (6,7)
- 15 Critical comments made by the main sort taking on a public notice variant. (13)
- 21 and 22 Where they show off Easter bonnets and such. (The organizers of the July 4 festivities might.) (7,7)
- 23 Cheer for the team on time, when this takes a firm fixture underneath. (7)
- 24 It's the very old version of a young kid, leaning the wrong way. (7)
- 25 Not all like to come back with it, being a leader at one time. (6)
- 26 Sort of agrees about the starting price, involving a little sprinkle for some. (8)

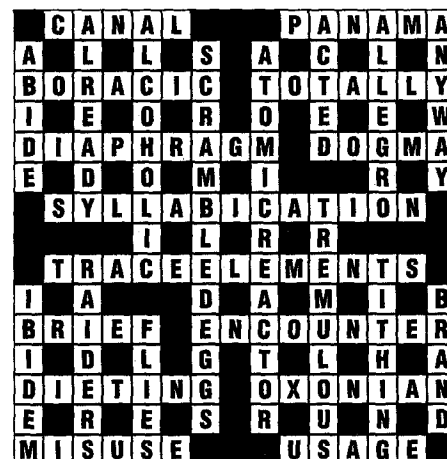
DOWN

- 1 A war-time fighter, being more than just a night-time prowler. (3-3)
- 2 The young lady is evidently not in, and will fail to get the goodies if they do this. (4,3)
- 3 Certainly not a conventional type found decades ago, getting to whip what comes out of the pen. (7)
- 4 The way of PR? (7,6)
- 6 In Wales you'll find a real character—one very loud! (7)
- 7 That's the price for learning what everything is all about! (7)



- 8 Perhaps sign up when it isn't the cash type, and possibly regrets putting one in it. (8)
- 10 They have to get used to being at the beck and call of dictators. (13)
- 14 Certain ones are not supposed to show what you are made of, but rather what you made. (3,5)
- 16 Briefly, where one might hold a position hoping to catch flies. (2,5)
- 17 One whose opening remarks were rather seedy. (3,4)
- 18 Where one expects to find deer and antelope within shooting distance, supplied by air. (2,5)
- 19 Does such an acquaintance always appear to be agreeing with you—or is one just bored? (7)
- 20 Very knowing when you and I more objectively get around it, but they represent common practice. (6)

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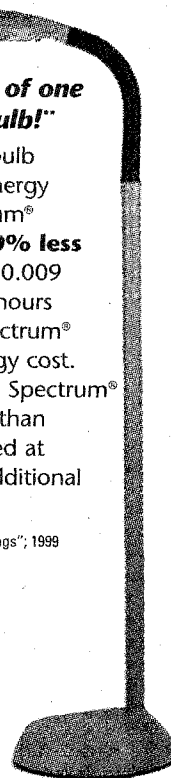
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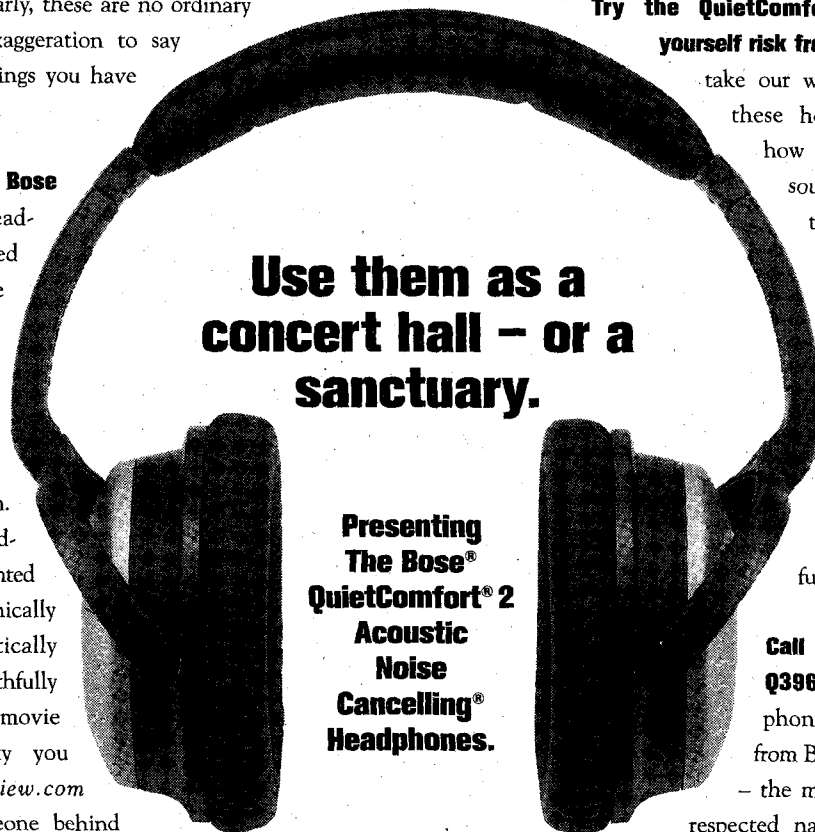
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